



FIELD-MARSHAL SIR DOUGLAS HAIG, SEPTEMBER 1917

Imperial War Museum

FROM SERAJEVO TO THE RHINE

GENERALS OF THE GREAT WAR

by
Arminius

Translated from the German by
GERALD GRIFFIN

WITH 17 ILLUSTRATIONS

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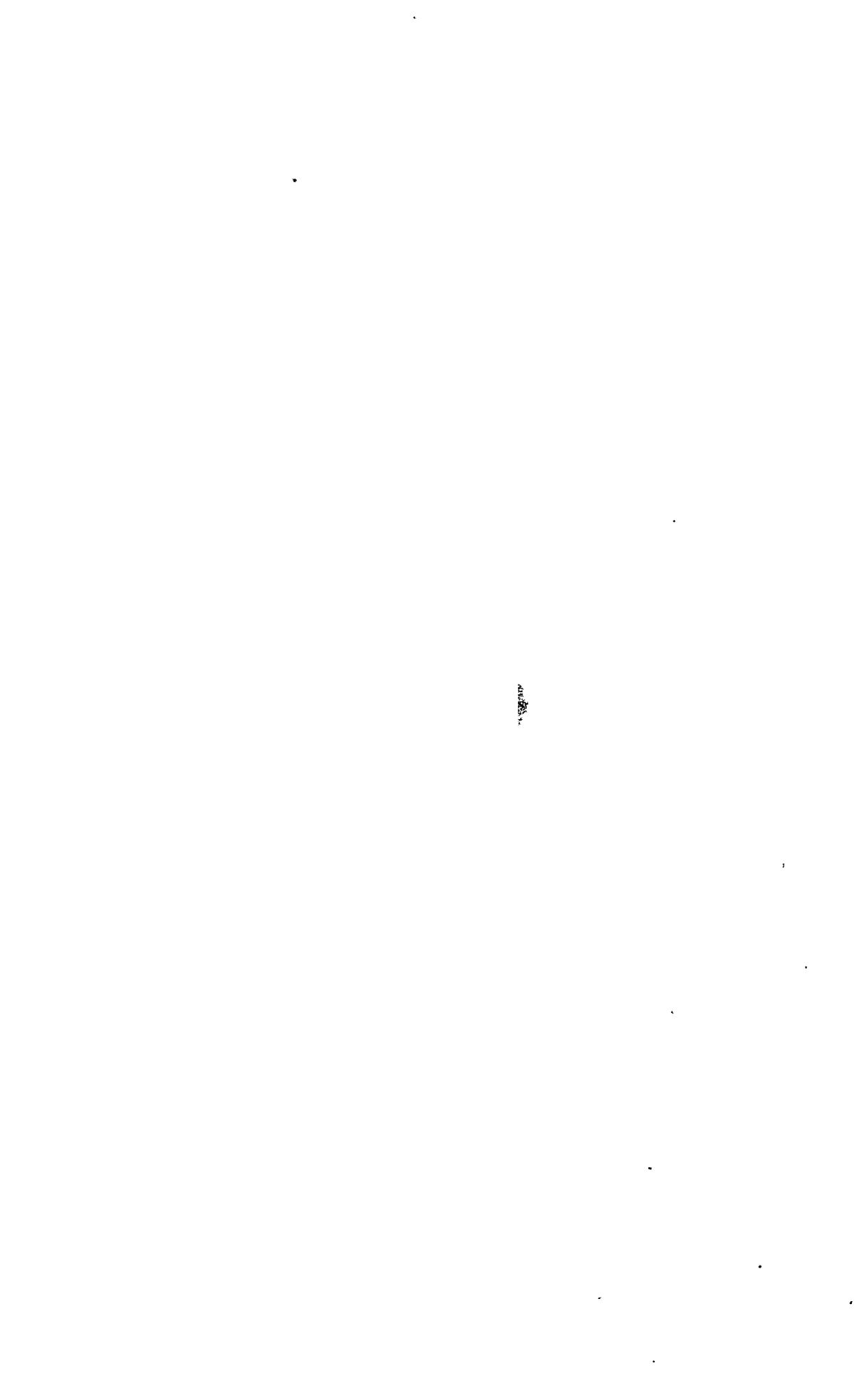
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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

TO British readers the visualisation in this book of the war achievements of the Allied and enemy generals by a German, who aims at a strictly impartial survey of the wide field he covers, but whose perspective, for all that, is occasionally blurred by the mirage of patriotic partialities, will be illuminative. While making allowance for involuntary *suppressio veri*, overstatement and rather fulsome hero-worship, we profit by "seeing oursells as ither see us." Incidentally, the author, who prefers to remain anonymous, is a well-known authority on the history of the Great War.

Arminius contends that both non-poisonous and poisonous gas was first used by the French, and that the Germans merely followed the precedent set to them. If this is true, a belated apology is due by Allied propaganda for a hoary libel on Germany. However, in the most up-to-date authentic work on the war, *The Real War*, Captain Liddell Hart states that lachrymatory gas-shells were tentatively used by the Germans as far back as October 27th, 1914, in the Neuve Chapelle sector, while lethal gas was discharged by them against the French trenches at Ypres on April 22nd, 1915. Still, Arminius makes his statement on the subject in perfect good faith, as he was apparently misled by German war-bulletins, which were possibly garbled with a view to deprecating moral obloquy abroad and humanitarian sensitiveness in the Fatherland.

Apropos of this, the following extracts from German official bulletins issued on the Western Front are significant :

March 1st, 1915. . . . "At one sector on our front the French used shells, as they had already done some months ago, which, on exploding, discharged a foul-smelling, asphyxiating gas. . . ."

April 16th, 1915. . . . "The French are using asphyxiating gas-bombs more intensively."

The following extract from the *Vossische Zeitung*, dated April 23rd, 1915, should also vindicate the candour, if not the authenticity of the statement of Arminius :

"Our enemies have already adopted this system of warfare for many months. Obviously they think they can do as they like, but that we must not follow their precedent. . . . Chemical science has made such strides in Germany that we can manufacture a far more effective kind of gas than the French."

While Arminius offers incense at the shrines of Hindenburg and Ludendorff, and is rather unctuous at times in his praise of Foch and Conrad, and is generous to Haig, Pershing and Sir Henry Wilson, he very unfairly dismisses the late Viscount French in a few curt, ungracious words. This is unjust to the memory of a general who, with all his limitations, did excellent service to the Allied cause at the head of a little army which had only been trained for, and used to, colonial skirmishing. It is all very well to sneer at the retreat from Mons ; were it not for the care with which Sir John French (he was not a peer then) handled that situation, that retreat would have been a rout. An admission of the difficulties awaiting the British Expeditionary Force on its arrival in Europe can be gleaned from Lord Kitchener's formal instructions to French on giving him the command :

"It must be recognised from the outset that the numerical strength of the British force and its contingent reinforcement is extremely limited. . . . It will be obvious that the greatest care must be exercised towards a minimum of losses and wastage. . . . The gravest consideration will devolve on you as to the participation in forward movements where large bodies of French troops are not engaged, and where your force may be unduly exposed to attack. Should any contingency of this sort be contemplated, I look upon you to inform me fully. . . . You will in no case come in any sense under the orders of any Allied general. . . .

"In minor operations you should be careful that . . .

risk of serious losses should only be undertaken when such risk is authoritatively considered to be commensurate with the object in view. . . . Officers may well be reminded that in this, their first experience of European warfare, a greater measure of caution must be employed than under former conditions of hostilities against an untrained adversary."

On reading between the lines of these contradictory instructions, one is convinced that, no matter what happened, French was in for it. He was like the old woman in the Middle Ages who was tried for witchcraft by the ordeal of water. If she swam she was pronounced guilty and burned at the stake; if she sank—well, she sank, and that was that!

Many students of the war contend that Kitchener, whose misgivings about the efficiency of the British Expeditionary Force are obvious from his letter, would never have consented to its summary despatch to France had it not been long previously bespoke for the ranks of death by the egregious optimism of Sir Henry Wilson. That "egregious" is not too strong an adjective here may be gleaned from this entry from Wilson's diary on December 4th, 1914:

"Dined with King. Also Prince of Wales and Stamfordham. . . . Stamfordham said among other things that I was more responsible for England going into the war than any other man. I think this is true. . . . I still think the war will be over by February or March."

From the outset it was quite obvious that Joffre and his subordinates were inclined to expect too much help from, and give too little help to, the B.E.F. When French, seeing that the British army was posted on the left or exposed flank of the 5th French army, requested Joffre to place under his orders the French cavalry division and the two reserve divisions which were echeloned in his rear, the French commander-in-chief refused. And from the outset French was very disagreeably impressed by his neighbour, General Lanrezac, the commander of the 5th French army. "He was a big man with a loud voice," wrote French in his book of

memoirs, entitled *Viscount French*, " and his manner did not strike me as being very courteous."

It was in his anxiety to carry out Kitchener's injunctions and at the same time to deprecate the boorishness of the " big man with the loud voice " on his right, that Sir John French began to retreat from Mons later than the Allies, but, once started, fell back more precipitately and further. Like the old man in the fable, by trying to please everybody he pleased nobody, and lost his ass into the bargain. The British had reached their deployment line, Conde-Mons-Binche, on August 23rd, only to find that Namur was on the verge of falling, and that Lanrezac's army, which had been attacked on the 21st and deprived of the crossings of the Sambre, was now being stormed all along the front by the fifth German army, and was falling back on Givet-Philippeville-Maubeuge. Sir John French did not begin his retirement from Mons until he found that he was being outnumbered and outflanked. He had promised Lanrezac that he would stick it out at Mons for twenty-four hours after the French retreat had started, and he kept his promise. In doing so, he was taking a risk against which Kitchener had warned him in his quaint letter—a risk of being crushed by the pressure of the Germans on his front and his outer flank, and of losing contact for good and all with Lanrezac. The fight of the British against five German divisions during those twenty-four hours and their subsequent gallant rear-guard action, including the famous stand at Le Cateau, was a splendid baptism of fire for the B.E.F. in " their first experience of European warfare "—to quote Kitchener again.

And before the B.E.F. the steadily dwindling remnant of the British Regular Army, merged into the national armies now rising rapidly in England, it staged the immortal battle of Ypres. On October 31st and November 1st seven British infantry divisions and four cavalry divisions held a front of some thirty-six miles in a perilously thin straggling line—a line stretched out through sheer absolute necessity beyond the safety margin for defence—a line trailing from Ypres, past Wytschaete, Messines and to Armentières. For forty-eight hours they stood the full brunt of the fury of two

and a half German army corps. Right, left and centre the "Old Contemptibles" were hard pressed, and their front was strained to breaking-point, but they held out doggedly, and the tension was eventually relieved by the opportune arrival of French reinforcements. It is true that before the battle Sir John French, overcome by another attack of that periodic itch for retreating which had afflicted him ever since his obsession that Lanrezac had left him in the lurch in the early stages of the retreat from Mons, was only prevented by the diplomatic cajolings of Foch from falling back on Boulogne, where he contemplated building a huge entrenched camp for the B.E.F. Foch, who foresaw disaster for the whole front in such a project, being aware of French's persecution mania, and being also a keen psychologist, whispered to him in confidence that Kitchener had proposed sacking him, and giving his job to Sir Ian Hamilton. That whisper reacted as Foch expected it would. French stood his ground—and won the Battle of Ypres. He got good help, of course, from Haig.

Summing up the record of the old B.E.F. under French up to the end of 1914, we find that they had scored one great offensive and another great defensive and had met with no serious reverse.

I have spoken of French's persecution mania. It seemed to be his lot to be eternally sniped at by Lord Kitchener, while occasionally French generals and even the French President chipped in. During the retreat from Mons he had repeatedly been urged by Kitchener and the French to stand and fight, although he knew that the Germans were making the pace too quick for any possibility of a pull-up on his part with his small and steadily dwindling force, and he knew that by making a stand he would sever his contact with Lanrezac. Lanrezac, "the man with the big voice," never forgave him for refusing to attack the Germans to relieve the pressure on the 5th French army at the Sambre.

French himself said later that had he yielded to "these violent solicitations," the whole army would have been thrown in disorder across the Marne, and Paris would have fallen.

Kitchener himself came across to Paris during the

course of the retreat, and had a violent scene at the British Embassy with French, because the latter refused to order his army to stand and fight. On that occasion Kitchener showed an unpardonable ignorance of the terrible plight of the B.E.F.

Later on Kitchener showed a keen anxiety to direct the trend of the operations of the B.E.F. from London, much to the irritation of French. Sheaves of telegrams came to French from London, containing instructions about local situations about which Kitchener could only have very hazy ideas.

French was justly very indignant when he heard that the operations for the relief of Antwerp were directed from London. He contended that it should have been left entirely in his hands or in those of the French commander-in-chief to decide upon the deployment of the troops as soon as they arrived on French soil. He added that Joffre and himself alone were in a position to judge as to the manner in which the new drafts were to be used. It is to the credit of French that, although he was given no say in the alignment of the Antwerp troops, he took all possible steps to keep in touch with the progress of events there, and to help Rawlinson, the commander of the expedition.

When General Sir James Grierson, commanding the Second Army Corps, died, Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien was appointed in his stead, although French had specially requested that the appointment should be given to Sir Herbert Plumer, who, in his opinion, was the ideal man for the job. French's request was not even acknowledged, and the question of Sir James Grierson's successor was not referred to him at all.

In January, 1915, General Murray, the chief of general staff attached to the B.E.F., resigned owing to ill-health, and French picked out Henry Wilson, who was sub-chief of general staff, as his successor. Wilson's appointment was forthwith vetoed, partly through pique on the part of Asquith owing to the support he had given to the Ulster Volunteers, and partly because Kitchener would not sanction a nomination made by French.

An interesting sidelight on the emotional and humanitarian element in French is seen in his remarks on the

failure of the Pope's effort to induce the belligerent Powers to arrange an armistice for Christmas Day, 1914. Incidentally, the Central Powers were in favour of the Pope's proposal, and so were Great Britain, France and Belgium, but the suggestion was shelved because Russia would not accede to it. French, whose martyrdom complex made him feel piqued because the Pope's suggestion was not referred to Joffre and him, comments on the incident thus in his memoirs :

" I have since often thought deeply of the principle involved in the manifestation of such sentiments between hostile armies in the field. I am not sure that, had the question of an agreement for an armistice on Christmas Day been referred to me, I should have dissented from it."

French uncompromisingly condemned the Gallipoli enterprise as a wild-cat scheme, started by the amateur soldiers of Downing Street, in spite of Lord Fisher's misgivings. He maintained that the British military forces at the time when the attempt to force the Dardanelles started, and for at least fifteen months afterwards, were inadequate for the carrying on of great operations in more than one theatre of war with the requisite driving power. He blamed the utterly futile and costly Gallipoli gamble for the settling down of the Western Front into static warfare in 1915, and for the series of abortive and flabby attempts to break through the German line.

In connection with this, it is significant that on May 9th, 1915, i.e. fifteen days after the " Battle of the Beaches " on the Gallipoli front, the Battle of Festubert, at the conclusion of which the whole Western Front had settled down into static warfare, which virtually meant a military impasse, opened. Only eight per cent of the shells available for the battle were high explosive, and the total supplies of ammunition were only adequate for forty minutes of artillery preparation for the offensive. Lord French, who surveyed the battle from a ruined church tower, said that he was convinced that there were three times as many casualties as would normally have been had he been able to provide an efficient barrage. The casualties totalled 20,000 !

"It must be remembered," runs an extract from Lord French's memoirs, "that all the time when the British forces in France were in absolute jeopardy owing to these deficiencies, trainloads of all kinds of ammunition were passing along our rear *en route* to Marseilles and the Dardanelles."

But the *reductio ad absurdum* of the "shell scandal" was reached when, after the Battle of Festubert, French received instructions from London to deliver over a large percentage of his ammunition for use in the Gallipoli campaign!

One can imagine what French must have felt when he read the report of Asquith's Newcastle speech on April 22nd, to the effect that the Western Front army had all the munitions it required. And on that very day the Germans made their first gas attack in the second Battle of Ypres, in a desperate effort to break through!

It was just after this dreadful provocation that French started his famous Press campaign, and also sent the following "secret" despatch to the military replicas in London of the "dry land sailor" in O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*:

"Large quantities of high-explosive shells for field guns have become essential owing to the form of warfare in which the army is engaged. The enemy is entrenched from the sea to the Swiss frontier. There is no flank in his position that can be turned. It is necessary, therefore, for all offensive operations to start by breaking the enemy's line, which presupposes the attack of formidable field entrenchments. Shrapnel, being the man-killing projectile which is used against troops in the open, is primarily used in defence. In offensive operations it is used for searching communication trenches, preventing enemy reinforcements intervening in the fight, repelling counter-attacks, and, as an alternative for high-explosive shell, for cutting wire-entanglements. It is, however, ineffective against the occupants of trenches, breast-works or buildings. It is, therefore, necessary to have high-explosive shell to destroy parapets, obstacles, buildings and many forms of fortified localities that the enemy constructs, more particularly his machine-gun

emplacements. Without an adequate shell-supply, an attack is impotent against the defenders of field fortifications, as the first step cannot be taken. Guns require 50 per cent of high-explosive shell. Howitzers use high-explosive shell almost exclusively."

And let me emphasise here once more French's complaint that at Festubert, which spelled "finis" to the warfare of movement on the Western Front, only 8 per cent of the shells were high explosive in a barrage that only lasted forty minutes! Of course French might have tried snowballs, if he were resourceful, which he wasn't, and if he were in the Carpathians or the Alps which he wasn't, and if it were winter, which it wasn't. Anything would have been better than writing to the papers. No wonder they sacked him!

GERALD GRIFFIN

INTRODUCTION

THIS book aims at giving to the average lay reader a succinct account of the part played by the various leaders on all fronts during the Great War. Strict impartiality and accuracy in detail were the writer's objectives during the course of his meticulous sifting of the various authorities on which the work is based. More ambitious volumes cater for the taste of military experts with a flair for investigating the tactical and strategical minutiae of great battles and manoeuvres. In this little treatise the *motif* has been a study of the reaction of the character and temperament of the various generals upon the *morale* of their troops and upon the trend of the mighty issues whose destiny they guided. It is the writer's firm conviction that the personality of a commander is as important a factor in modern warfare as it was in the days of generals with gleaming swords charged on high-mettled steeds at the head of their troops against the serried ranks of the enemy. It is an utter fallacy to contend that, owing to all the devastating technical appliances now used in warfare, the machine had ousted the man in battle. A perusal of the following pages will convince the most sceptical reader that the era of the robot general has not yet arrived.

The generals of the Great War were decidedly not robots. Some of them were very competent, some highly incompetent. There was not a real military genius among the whole bunch, however. Had there been one, the war would hardly have dragged on for such a weary length. But each individual general, whether competent, incompetent or mediocre, affected by his personality the *élan* and *Stimmung* of his soldiers and the success or failure of the enterprises he conducted.

For nearly four years the greater efficiency of the commanders of the armies of the Central Powers enabled

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them not merely to hold their own against the superior numbers that the Allies put into the field, but to win decisive victories on the Eastern Front and in the Balkans. In the last half-year of the war numerical superiority was on the side of the Allies, and the initiative and determination of their generals were among the decisive factors that contributed to the ultimate victory.

Nobody will deny that the Allied armies showed extraordinary bravery during the first four years of the war. The record of their prowess on all fronts and their heavy casualty lists are eloquent testimony in this respect. And it should be pointed out, of course, that in addition to superior generalship, there were other important factors that contributed to the successes of the Central Powers during the first four years of the war. Their soldiers were better trained than those of the Allies, and their technical equipment and their organisation, too, were on a far more efficient scale.

The generals of the armies of the Central Powers had to tackle, among other serious problems, that of coping with adversaries on several fronts, and of distributing their forces among the different theatres of war. It was a problem with which Great Britain had to cope, too, though in a far lesser degree, while the other belligerents had just to fight with the enemy right ahead of them.

The generals of the Central Powers committed many mistakes during the first four years of the war, but the mistakes of their enemies were much more numerous and infinitely more serious. And the victory which the Allies gained eventually was due more to superiority in manpower and in armaments, and to the reaction of the hunger blockade than to any stroke of genius on the part of the western generals.

No attempt is being made in this book at giving biographical sketches of the various generals. Their pre-war and post-war careers are only referred to in their bearing upon and reaction from their war achievements. It will be seen, incidentally, that they were not merely military automata—that they were intensely human, and that not one of them was either a superman, an angel, or a devil.

FROM SERAJEVO TO THE RHINE

MOLTKE—THE SICK MAN

KEYED to the highest pitch of enthusiasm, Germany's army, perhaps the most impressive army that the world had ever seen so far, marched from victory to victory in August, 1914. But this magnificent army was led by a man, who, like Benedik, the ill-fated Austrian general at Königsgratz, was given supreme command against his will. He was obsessed from the outset by a sense of inability to cope with his colossal task.

Not only was he staggered by the terrible responsibility with which he was faced ; he was a man of sixty-six years, and suffered from a malady which the most skilled doctors were unable to cure. Furthermore, it was not his own schemes that he was called upon to execute. The plan of campaign was drawn up long years before by the great Schlieffen. It was sprung suddenly upon Moltke, who shrank in terror at first from the audacity of the enterprise. Schlieffen had been in favour of concentrating the entire weight of the offensive on the north. He had planned to march through Belgium, make a detour round the French frontier fortresses and encircle Paris. Alsace-Lorraine and the Eastern Front were to be protected with the very minimum of troops, even though thereby a temporary loss of German territory might be entailed. Moltke was less daring. He reduced the strength of his offensive in the north, and sent reserves to strengthen the defending armies. But even then there remained just two armies in German territory, while five were detailed for the advance through Belgium and Luxemburg.

While the German divisions poured like a flood-tide

past Liége to Brussels and Namur and hurled back the Belgian army towards Antwerp, the French invaded German territory. The defenders were successful in their encounters with them. Whereupon Moltke decided to throw all his reserves into the fray. Although Schlieffen had expressed the view that the nearer the French came to Germany, the more certain would they be to fail in their decisive coup at Paris, Moltke threw all his available forces, an entire army, into the fray just at the very spot where the French frontier fortresses made any likelihood of a speedy decision impossible. An effort to concentrate one's strength on all fronts is the surest way to make them all weak.

And now Moltke arrived at another decision. The German army had hurled the French successfully over the Lorraine and Belgian frontiers. Northern France was just in front of the foe—an easy prey. Just then came the news of the Russian invasion of East Prussia—a contingency that had been foreseen long before the war. The fortresses and the strong defence lines afforded an effectual bulwark against the invaders, to be sure. But Moltke felt uneasy, and lost confidence in the plan of campaign which he had just undertaken. He recalled his reserves from the Belgian front, and sent them to the East. He had also half-decided upon the idea of ordering the troops in Lorraine to attack the French fortresses—a task that before the war had been considered by military experts to be extremely difficult and likely to be a very tedious affair. Unable to carry out the stupendous enterprise assigned to him and to accept responsibility, Moltke fell into a vacillating mood. Obsessed by doubts, he tried all sorts of devices which culminated in wholesale frustration.

The armies of the original wing that was intended for the decisive wheel forged ahead steadily through Northern France. Moltke could not keep pace with them. He had the chance on three separate occasions, i.e. at Mons, at Namur and at Guise of making a wheeling advance round the English army and the French army on its flank. He let all three opportunities slip. Once his anxiety about Lorraine and East Prussia was over, after he had expended his reserves, his capacity for

leadership was at an end. The further the armies advanced, the fewer were the orders issued by him, and once the Marne was crossed, the reins of leadership dropped completely out of his hands.

The advance had now swung towards the south and south-west. This was a fundamental alteration of the original plan, as Paris could no longer be invested from the west, but stood outside the zone of the end of the German western flank. This change of plan was not, however, the result of any definite decision on the part of Moltke, but had evolved from his attitude of negative passivity. The very vagueness of any instructions issued by him gave an opening for independent action on the part of his subordinates—nay, it even necessitated such action. Besides, in consequence of the steps which had been taken by Moltke, the German forces were far too weak now to carry out the original idea of an investment of Paris necessitating the extension of troops over a very wide area. Moltke had found that he was forced to adopt to a certain extent quite a new plan of campaign owing to the changes that had been made in the scheme of the front line without his sanction and even against his wishes. The right wing of his army had to cope with Paris, while the mission of the other armies in the great wing extending around and past Verdun was to hurl back the main forces of the enemy towards the south-east, to the Swiss frontiers, or failing that, to the chain of fortresses.

By an extraordinary stroke of luck definite information about the end of the French retreat was disclosed by the interception of an order by Joffre. Whereupon Moltke began to become very dubious about the prospects of a victorious advance, and was obsessed with fears about his exposed right flank, the precarious position of the entire front from Paris to the Channel Ports, and the hopeless fighting in the area of the French fortresses. He looked upon the intercepted instructions of Joffre for the imminent offensive, not as valuable information, but as a threat. He began to revolve in his mind plans for retreat, and only dropped the idea in consequence of a definite order from the Kaiser not to undertake such a step without definite permission from him.

Moltke proved himself incapable of carrying out the great scheme of Schlieffen. And the German headquarters failed to give adequate support to the troops who were advancing through Luxemburg, while Moltke lay ill in bed. In the finest army in the world the incredible position evolved that the two armies that were nearest to Paris were cut off from one another and from Luxemburg for several days. Both before and during the decisive fight no direct report came from either of them to Moltke, and no instructions were given by the commander-in-chief to his generals. Moltke was well aware that a battle was in progress ; he had a shrewd idea that a great decisive engagement was raging from Paris to Verdun. Utterly incapable of doing anything, cut off absolutely from all sources of information, he was in an agony of anxiety.

Thirty-five German divisions were fighting between Paris and Verdun. Of the fourteen¹ remaining divisions some were posted in Lorraine in front of the fortresses, and others were marching to the east, where they arrived, by the irony of fate, too late for Tannenberg. But despite inferiority in numbers and cut off as they were from their commander, the *élan* of the troops and the resourcefulness of the subordinate generals turned the tide of battle. Dexterous strategy on the part of the first German army foiled the manœuvres of the French troops that sallied from Paris ; the second army successfully repelled fierce onslaughts, while the third and fourth made good progress after very heavy fighting ; the fifth army kept up a dogged battle on the Verdun sector. Fortune was most decidedly favouring the German forces.

Still confined to his bed and cut off from his armies, Moltke made desperate efforts to get news. He knew that the great hour had struck, and chafed at his enforced inactivity. Worried by the news of heavy casualty lists, and by the vague and contradictory reports he got about one battle after another, he strained every nerve to get authentic information. The Kaiser himself was setting out for the front, but desisted from the idea at the

¹ Ten had been sent to the Eastern Front, eight were in Lorraine, and two were marching to the east.

urgent request of the generals. Reverting to the method of the days when there was neither telephone, telegraph, nor wireless, Moltke at length decided to send a liaison officer to the various armies. Instead of one of the many authoritative veteran warriors available, he selected Lieutenant-Colonel Hentsch, a youth attached to the headquarters staff. In the presence of witnesses Hentsch received instructions to ascertain the real position of the various armies and to report to headquarters accordingly. It seems quite probable that Hentsch also had a private interview with Moltke, during which they discussed particulars about his mission. There are divergent reports about the details of the instructions given by Moltke to Hentsch in the presence of witnesses. No notes were taken by any of the witnesses either during or immediately after this fateful hour which proved so disastrous to Germany. Consequently it will never be possible to throw any light upon the subject. Hentsch doggedly maintained that he received full authority to give commands where necessary, and that he had special power to give orders for a retreat should he deem it advisable. This assertion was more or less vehemently refuted at a later date by Moltke and the other witnesses. They insisted that at the utmost Hentsch had a commission to inquire into the position of affairs and to examine the possibilities for rearguard action, if such were necessary. It seems pretty certain that the instructions given by the gloomy Moltke must have been in a rather pessimistic vein, especially if Hentsch had a private chat with him. Still, it seems very strange that Moltke without any further ado would have waived the Kaiser's instructions that no orders for a retreat should be given without his express instructions, and would have verbally given definite instructions to a subordinate to act as a plenipotentiary. It was a great mistake that no written instructions were drawn up in connection with the very important mission which the young officer had to undertake. On the other hand, this very circumstance seems to suggest that Hentsch merely received from Moltke a formal commission to inquire into the military position at the front. Still, as I have already said, we shall never know the facts of the case.

Hentsch started on his mission under the twofold obsession of the extraordinary responsibility attached to his task, and of the great anxiety of his chief. Moreover, like Moltke himself, he was an invalid. He did not proceed at once towards the two mighty armies on the right flank, but to the three others. When he arrived at the front his attitude at first was rather reticent and diffident. His chilling demeanour clashed somewhat with the then hilarious activity of both officers and soldiers. Under the circumstances it is not surprising that he found people very uncommunicative, and had to depend on his own powers of observation. Temperamentally a pessimist, he viewed everything in connection with the armies on the flanks with atrabilious eyes. The defeatist attitude assumed by this sickly envoy of a sickly commander was such a glaring contrast to the demeanour of the officers in the three first armies that he visited, that one can only assume that he had taken on a job for which he was hopelessly incompetent. The only alternative explanation is that he had a definite secret mandate from Moltke to give the order for retreat.

Hentsch adapted himself more and more to his role as the days sped on. He held the fate of the armies in his hands. He began to regard himself as the representative of the commander-in-chief, nay of the Kaiser himself. He felt that he must act strongly, and save Germany. Some days previously perhaps it might have been advisable to break away from the enemy and reorganise for a new offensive; but to adopt such a step now that the battle had started meant defeat—nothing more or less. This Hentsch could not realise. Obsessed by a sense of his Napoleonic role, this earnest young man saw indications of disaster all round him. He saw that they were already only too conscious at headquarters that things were looking black. He now felt convinced that the position was positively dangerous. If the armies were to venture to make an advance, or even hoped to make an advance, they were suffering from delusions. They were not able to realise how desperate their plight was. And this earnest young man was resolved to save them from themselves. He was quite oblivious of the fact that in his fleeting visit he had only had a very impressionist



FIELD MARSHAL SIR JOHN FRENCH

Imperial War Museum

glance of actualities. And he had closed his eyes to any successful operations. The sickly youth re-echoed the gloomy preoccupations of his sick master in Luxemburg, and his morbidly sensitive imagination exaggerated into an indication of panic fear the slightest indication of transient anxiety among the generals whom he met.

In an interview with the commander of one of the flanking armies he conjured up a terrible picture of the state of affairs in the army outside Paris—a picture based largely on his own imaginings, inasmuch as he had not as yet even laid his eyes on that army. Bankrupt for facts, he made up the deficiency by exploiting trivial local set-backs that had been reported to him. Failing them, he depended on his own biased casual impressions of what he saw around him, and minimised the importance of any definite successes. In this way he succeeded in committing the commander to a contingent promise that he would give the order for retreat. The damage that Hentsch was doing was intensified by the fact that the commanders of the two flanking armies knew nothing about their relative positions, as they had lost contact with one another. Hentsch, who undertook to restore that contact, brought irreparable ruin in his train in the process. For this ruin, Moltke was, of course, primarily to blame, because he had allowed the armies to lose contact. He was, however, by this time a broken man. The driblets of incoherent, and for the most part, inaccurate news of disaster that reached his sick bed, had completely unnerved him. "The appalling difficulty of our position," thus runs an extract from his diary, "rises before my eyes like a colossal black wall that bars all progress."

Following up his mission of disaster, Hentsch went to the second and last flanking army. By this time he had already visited four armies without sending a report to his chief. The fact that he deemed this unnecessary strengthens the grounds for the surmise that he was fully informed with regard to Moltke's views, and acted in the role of plenipotentiary. His journey to the last army brought him into tentative touch with the fighting zone. And now for the very first time this youth, fresh from the peaceful atmosphere of headquarters, had a fleeting

glimpse of actual warfare. He was horrified to see that things were not working with the clockwork routine precision of the barrack-yard. There was definitely something radically wrong when the component parts of the military machine did not operate like clockwork. Convoys dashing past with utter disregard for military discipline, overcrowded trainloads of wounded men, overcrowded field-hospitals, soldiers prostrate by the wayside in a coma of sheer exhaustion—and, worst of all, private soldiers dashing up to their officers and accosting them without standing at attention ! All this conveyed to the callow youth an impression of lax discipline and demoralisation. And then when a few shells burst fairly near him, and when he saw a troop of cavalry dashing helter-skelter in the rear, and beheld from a safe point of vantage the effect of a few bombs dropped from the air, he decided that an immediate retreat was the only way to save, not merely the army, but to save Germany. His own forebodings and those of Moltke seemed now to him to have been fully confirmed. And so with his mind fully made up, he proceeded in the role of Cassandra to the headquarters of the mightiest of the German armies, the one near Paris. On his arrival he found that the menace to the position of that army had been averted, and that the encircling enemy had himself been encircled. He found that the generals were in high fettle. Dismayed though he was by the news of successful engagements, and by the sanguine attitude of everybody, Hentsch was determined not to give way to optimism. He played his part with a cleverness worthy of a nobler objective. He expounded his gospel of despair *seriatim* to the generals. His own casual impressions during his trip along the front, and misunderstood and half-understood fragments of orders wrenched from their context, were advanced in support of his mission of defeatism. He painted the position of the army that he had just left in the blackest colours. He represented the contingent undertaking by that army to retreat as a retreat already in full operation. In reality at that very moment a decisive victory had been won by the army on the flank of the Paris army, but its commander, who was completely under the spell of Hentsch, had already taken steps for rearguard move-

ment before he had any idea of the victory. Even now it was not too late to save the situation ; the orders given could easily be countermanded. The troops most decidedly would have at that stage been only too eager to advance once more, instead of retreating. All that Hentsch had to do in order to undo the damage that he had already done, was to send word to the flanking army that he had been misinformed with regard to the position of the Paris army. Instead of that, Hentsch, so to speak, virtually pointed his revolver at the general of the Paris army while he was still fighting, and forced him to throw away the fruits of a victory won at great cost. Hentsch emphasised his own position as a plenipotentiary, and pointed out that he was merely carrying out the instructions of Moltke and the Kaiser. He also threw out ominous hints about the disaster swift and irreparable which disobedience of his orders would entail.

Hentsch's mission of disaster was unfortunately only too successful. With tears in their eyes the generals were forced to obey his instructions. With the retreat the flank of the whole German army was exposed, and the entire Western Front had to give way. The conquerors abandoned the battle-field. It was a complete and absolute triumph for Hentsch.

And so the invalid general sent an invalid youth who was a prey to defeatism and delusion into the welter of the Western Front. And on this youth lay the responsibility for having at an early stage thwarted a smashing victory for the Central Powers in the World War. Of course we have Moltke's own word for it that he had not the faintest idea of the real state of affairs before he was presented by Hentsch with a *fait accompli*. He had been made a commander-in-chief without being consulted in the matter, and through the agency of Hentsch he had now been made a wrecker of his country without being consulted in the matter.

In mere justice it must be noted that the full significance of the Battle of the Marne could not possibly have been realised by the German generals at that date. The "war of positions" had not even been invented then. They had hoped that after a brief spell of rearguard action carried out under favourable conditions, they

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could resume their advance, after they had transferred to the north of France the reserves who had been so disadvantageously drawn up facing the chain of fortresses.

Viewed in retrospect, this cycle of errors and omissions and this conglomeration of reverses and mischances which combined to change the victorious advance of the German army into an utterly undeserved defeat, seem to have been the outcome of a freak of malignant fate—fate implacable and relentless in the sense in which the ancient Greeks understood the term. The French speak of it as the miracle of the Marne. A sick man and his sick envoy performed the miracle.

FALKENHAYN—THE MAN OF HALF-MEASURES

WITH the exception of Pershing and Grand-duc Nicholas there was perhaps no general in the Great War whose appearance bore the stamp of the soldier so perfectly as did Falkenhayn's. The appointment to supreme command of a man who was junior in rank not only to all the army commanders, but even to all the corps commanders, was the work of the Kaiser's immediate entourage, whose lack of knowledge of mankind, as exemplified, to start with, in the selection of Bethmann-Hollweg as Imperial Chancellor, proved disastrous to Germany. The Kaiser's advisers had for a long time decided that Falkenhayn, who was then just fifty-three, should succeed Moltke, whose health had been rapidly declining for some time. His career as Minister for War and the striking figure he cut in court and political circles were deciding factors in securing him the post. Unfortunately it does not follow that an efficient Minister for War and an elegant courtier is likely to prove a first-rate general. Falkenhayn's tall and symmetrical figure was suggestive of energy and self-confidence. His ease of manner and his courtly demeanour impressed everybody. His clear piercing eyes lit up a face eloquent of poise and self-control.

One can imagine how Falkenhayn's imposing presence must have acted as a tonic at German headquarters when he succeeded the invalid Moltke. But a serious drawback to his prospects, in addition to his relatively junior standing as a officer, was, above all, his lack of personal touch with his subordinates, a lack of which the Kaiser's intimate circle could have no idea naturally. The strained relations that ensued often caused him to see personal attacks in divergences of opinion, and in his dealings with all grades which were not superior to his own, to adopt an ironical and caustic tone, in order to

cloak his own weakness, his lack of authority and his unpopularity.

Falkenhayn's system was a clean break-away in every respect from Moltke's methods, and, unconsciously and unwittingly perhaps, showed that, in contrast to his predecessor, he was not one of the numerous disciples of the school of Schlieffen. As Minister for War, Falkenhayn had planned and carried out the mobilisation arrangements without a hitch, and thereby had made a decided impression on the nation. It was also hoped that the friction which had occurred in previous wars between the Minister for War and the Chief of Staff could be avoided by combining both offices, and giving them to him. But in a few months it was quite clear that this combination was both constitutionally and practically unworkable. And yet it was destined that Falkenhayn himself was to evolve into something quite different from what the Kaiser and his headquarters had foreseen. They were deceived by appearances. However, despite the rising tide of antipathy that surged round him from all quarters, Falkenhayn, thanks to his impressive appearance and his ready wit, was able to hold out for two years.

At the Marne the original plan of campaign failed, which was to strike a decisive blow against the enemy in the west, while Austria-Hungary covered the rear in the east with small German forces. The decision in the west was side-tracked. Falkenhayn was to form a new plan of campaign and to give the whole scheme a new goal and a new direction. Falkenhayn himself devised this scheme, and adopted it again and again as the basis of all his operations as head of the German army. He said that the decision of the war had been postponed by its initial developments. Consequently it was likely to last for a long time. In order to prevent the Central Powers, which were less prepared to face a protracted war than their opponents, from frittering away their strength, his view was that they should be very sparing of all kinds of ammunition, and should only aim at minor objectives. In this way, he contended, the Allies would realise that the cost of a fight to a finish would be far too high. This was the attitude which Falkenhayn held should be adopted towards the enemy. The working-out of his theory in

practice we find in the failure of his enterprises in the west in 1914 and in the qualified success of his campaigns in the east up to the beginning of 1915. And these results were due far less to the weakness of the Central Powers than to Falkenhayn's half-hearted measures in dealing with the problem of the two fronts.

There is, indeed, no theory of conducting a campaign which portrays so plainly a lack of consciousness of military strength as Falkenhayn's did. It is tantamount to absolute despair of attaining a positive victory; its supreme objective is keeping the enemy at arm's length—a succession of drawn battles. Such a theory of fighting is almost unparalleled in the history of warfare. It leaves the enemy freedom of action and time for a series of attacks, and forces the defenders to face an exhausting, prolonged attrition process which Falkenhayn himself in the early stages of the war described as almost unendurable.

The reputation of Hindenburg and Ludendorff was not quite established when Moltke disappeared from the scene. But for all that, Falkenhayn was uneasily conscious of the menace to himself which the great influence of those two military experts who had won such brilliant victories in the east while he dallied in the west, could entail. Rank, seniority and success—they were factors which aggravated Falkenhayn's difficulties in coping with Hindenburg and Ludendorff. His two rivals were becoming daily more and more popular. Falkenhayn was not popular, and never aimed at being popular.

The fight against the Russians always seemed to him a matter of secondary importance. He attributed the optimism regarding the ultimate victory which prevailed among the Central Powers not so much to the successes in the east and to the sweeping Gorlice victory as to the defensive campaigns in the west.

The correspondence on military matters between Falkenhayn and the two Eastern Front commanders was somewhat acrimonious. Falkenhayn found it very hard to restrain his temper and keep his dignity in dealing with Hindenburg and Ludendorff.

The Austro-Hungarian commander was Conrad, who was subordinate to Falkenhayn, and through pressure of

circumstances was forced to keep eternally begging for help for his army, which only came in very small detachments. In his memoirs written after the war, Falkenhayn has hardly a good word to say for Conrad's army. Whenever he refers to him it is always in the same censorious tone. Conrad's mistakes and miscalculations he always exaggerates and enlarges upon to the utmost.

In his memoirs Falkenhayn showed such a hazy knowledge of the complex structure of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that he made several extraordinary blunders. In his view the German divisions sent to Southern Hungary following the declaration of war by Italy, were engaged there really with the suppression of the southern element of the population. Apparently he was not aware that that was the very section of the inhabitants of Southern Hungary which fought with the greatest bitterness against the Italians. Again he looked on the Isonzo front as an ideal defensive position, and asserted that this factor, combined with the inferiority of the Italians, explained the Austro-Hungarian success on that sector. He dismissed it, too, as only a superficial achievement. The loss of Austrian territory on this front he considered to be of very little significance.

Falkenhayn displayed an incredible, nay, an almost morbid malevolence in blaming Conrad "for not having paid sufficient care to the deploying of his army. He just plodded on, knowing that at any rate the Germans would have to help him." From these remarks taken just at random from Falkenhayn's book one can gauge what his attitude was during the war towards Conrad who was nine years his senior.

While Falkenhayn adhered rigidly to his view about narrowing the scope of military activities, the two generals in the east, each on his own account, found a similar solution for the new problem they had to face. Their contention was that it was obvious that no decision was being arrived at in the west, and that help was urgently needed in the east. On the other hand, they maintained that as the resources of the Central Powers were not adequate for an offensive in the west which would be carried on simultaneously with the despatch of reinforcements for the east, they should concentrate all their

efforts on the east with a view to an offensive there. Then when the enemy on the east was beaten, their rear would be perfectly safe, and they could swing round their forces to the west, following up a speedy and definite decision in the east. Later he resolved to try to adopt the initiative once more in the west—a very proper decision. Backed by the overwhelming significance of a victory in the west, he felt that he could face for a little while longer the menace of the rising danger in the east, in view of the battles which had recently been won in East Prussia. Yet the objective of his plan in the west was not quite intelligible. At first he arranged, as he himself admitted, for counter-offensives, made after very slight artillery preparations, along the whole front. They completely failed in their aim of holding up the enemy reserves. Following the collapse of the "race to the sea," came the great scheme of attacking Flanders with the reinforcements which had just come up. Falkenhayn stated at a later date that the sole object of these attacks was the protection of the sea-board, but from the tenacity with which they were carried out it is clear that the initial purpose was the seizure of the Channel Ports. But his offensive, carried out with the aid of young troops, failed, partly owing to errors in tactics, and partly because the Belgians flooded the country.

This was the state of things that Falkenhayn had to face at the end of October. Simultaneously, too, the third and last spell of quiet on the Eastern Front had ended, and urgent appeals for help came from that quarter. Falkenhayn was very much dismayed by the failure of his first great offensive. And from that date symptoms of his temperamental pessimism constantly obtruded themselves. With a stubbornness which was worthy of a better objective, and which recalled the *élan* of Verdun, he continued his Flanders offensive with a view to casting a veil over his failure. But on the other hand he could not refuse to send reinforcements to the east. He had given up the idea of a decision at Ypres by November 12th, yet it was November 22nd before he sent any forces to the east. And even so, it was only in small detachments and belatedly that the reinforcements arrived.

Even now Falkenhayn could not make up his mind

whether he should try to strike an effective blow in the east or in the west. It must have been quite obvious to him that the limited resources of the Central Powers could not cope with engagements on both fronts. The fact is that Falkenhayn's half-hearted measures were leading to cumulative disasters on both fronts. The abortive successes at Lodz and Lovicz seemed to him to support his contention that a decision in the field was not to be attained in the east. His persistence in contemplating an offensive in the west, although he was very well aware of the might of the enemy on that front, and was further well aware that he had committed himself to sending reinforcements to the east, is absolutely unintelligible. One wonders how he could have hoped to attain successes in the west with diminished forces, which he failed to attain with his troops at full strength.

After he had sent reinforcements to the east in November and December, 1914, he stopped the Flanders battle in the west only after weeks of very heavy losses. It is well known to-day how close his opponents were to breaking down at the beginning of the battle, how right was his decision in September, and yet how injudicious was his adherence to it at the end of October. For the first time his half-hearted measures had entailed the failure of a most promising engagement in the east.

The Imperial Chancellor was in favour in January, 1915, of dismissing Falkenhayn and appointing Ludendorff in his place. Apparently, however, the Kaiser could not make up his mind at the time to entrust Germany's fate to the young general, despite all his successes. The idea had not occurred to him at the time to adopt the compromise that was effected later of sending Hindenburg with Ludendorff to the Western Front. Falkenhayn's brilliant personality and his persuasive manner influenced the Kaiser, who decided that the east was relatively remote, and a victory would not be as dramatic as in the west. The Kaiser's coterie had made up their minds to back Falkenhayn through thick and thin.

A few days later a remarkable incident occurred. Parsimonious as Falkenhayn was in sending troops to the east, he was still more opposed to sending immediate

help to the Austro-Hungarian front. Without his assent, however, Hindenburg and Ludendorff had already promised support to this front. Falkenhayn subsequently concurred with their decision, but only on condition that the three German divisions should be under the control of a German commander, who should also have command of at least an equal number of Austro-Hungarian divisions. He appointed Ludendorff as chief of staff of the new army. He aimed at weakening the position of the commander in the east by separating Hindenburg and Ludendorff. Apart altogether from the reduction in rank which the change involved for Ludendorff, it was an extraordinary step to take from a practical point of view. Both commander and chief of staff, whose activities were co-ordinated with such brilliant success, lost much of their efficiency, with consequent reaction on the common cause. But Falkenhayn saw in the persistent demands of the German commanders in the east for reinforcements and their habit of emphasising lost opportunities an intolerable interference with his own plans for the Western Front. His quite justifiable anxiety to assert his own authority, tempted him to adopt wrong and ungracious means towards his end.

It is quite understandable why Conrad, as well as Hindenburg and Ludendorff, opposed Falkenhayn's views with the greatest vehemence. It is even possible, on the other hand, that in his protests Ludendorff occasionally outstepped the bonds of discipline. The Kaiser cancelled Ludendorff's "disciplinary change of office" after a few days. It is to be said in justice to Falkenhayn at the same time that he was somewhat justified in opposing the sending of reinforcements to the Carpathian front to assist Austria-Hungary. He felt no doubt that such help as he could send would be absolutely inadequate for the almost hopeless winter offensive, and, at best, would merely be a reserve for defensive action.

In the first months of 1915 Falkenhayn adopted a very extraordinary attitude towards Conrad with regard to the growing uneasiness about Italy's attitude. He shared the view of German diplomatic circles that Italy could be kept out of the war by means of territorial concessions to her. He was very touchy when there was any question

of encroaching upon German territory, but was inclined to be generous at the cost of Austria-Hungary. He could not see through Italy's arrogant attitude towards every concession that was suggested. The fact that she was steadily extending the scope of her demands conveyed no hint to him. Like many other superficially informed Germans, he thought that the surrender to Italy of South Tyrol, with its fortresses of the sea-board, the Adriatic Islands and Trieste, was quite a trivial matter. "They could all be taken back again," he naively remarked. That such an outrage on national sentiment, especially as it would be perpetrated forthwith, if at all, must inevitably deal a deadly blow to the morale of the army and of the monarchy, a blow almost as deadly as that dealt later by the manifesto of the Emperor Charles, he could not for a moment realise. Neither could he realise how hopeless would be the position of the Austrian defence, in the event of an offensive following such a transaction.

In order to emphasise his attitude on this point Falkenhayn gave Conrad evasive answers to every appeal for reinforcements, even though he knew that the position in the east was terribly imperilled. He hoped that by this means he could so shatter Conrad's nerves that he would give way to the demands of Italy. But while Falkenhayn's conduct seems very extraordinary, we must remember that in the pressure he was bringing to bear upon Conrad, he was not merely following his own impulse, but was carrying out instructions from headquarters. Whether concessions by Austria-Hungary which were discussed during the negotiations between the two Governments, would have delayed Italy's entrance into the war, or would have hastened it in consequence of the advantage she would have already gained over the dual monarchy, is a riddle that will ever remain unsolved.

We can quite appreciate why Falkenhayn declined Conrad's suggestion of attacking Italy, instead of following up Gorlice. We can equally appreciate why Conrad, who knew Falkenhayn's mentality, was anxious to do something definite. Falkenhayn insisted again and again upon the importance of a whole-hearted offensive against

Serbia, with a view to helping Turkey and impressing the neutral countries. Conrad was opposed to such a project, as he saw that it would render the Eastern Front insecure, as indeed the Carpathian engagements later proved. He very logically maintained that a firm support of the Carpathian campaign, and of the Eastern Front in general, was of more importance with regard to the psychological effect upon the neutral states, to wit, Italy and the Balkans, than any side-show against little Serbia. He added that, if necessary, they could march through Roumania, as long as the Dardanelles were open to them.

Falkenhayn's activities as a Minister for War up to the beginning of 1915 and his subsequent measures in the domain of organisation were remarkably successful. With the aid of able colleagues he paved the way for the use of gas in battle. It is important to note that France had set the precedent for the use of non-poisonous and of poisonous gas. Germany followed France's lead in this likewise, and Falkenhayn arranged for its speedy adoption in all offensives. He showed equal organising ability in seeing that there should be an abundant supplying of ammunition of all kinds. Under his *regis* the output of aircraft very soon far exceeded that of the enemy.

Of paramount importance was his adoption of a scheme previously devised by Schlieffen, for limiting the number of battalions to a division, and making up for the deficit in man-power by improved mechanical equipment and better training. He then used the superfluous battalions for the formation of new divisions. This scheme had an important effect upon Germany's fighting power. It provided the only solution for the enormous demands for new battle units. Strangely enough, Falkenhayn's device was imitated only by the Russians and the Turks. The English and French, it is true, at a later date, reduced the number of battalions to each division ; this was, however, not for the purpose of forming new divisions, but of maintaining the existing number.

In March, 1915, when the formation of new divisions by reducing the number of battalions was under way, Falkenhayn, despite his previous experiences, was again trying to make up his mind about a big offensive on the

Western Front. According to numerous writers among the Allies that was the exact period when, owing to shortage of ammunition, a definite sense of war-weariness and the hopelessness of the Dardanelles campaign, a German offensive would have had a great chance of success. But once more Falkenhayn's vacillating character stood in the way. He held that while an offensive in the west was desirable, it was impossible, owing to the demands on the Eastern Front. The winter fighting in Champagne had entailed many costly battles, but, for all that, the front stood firm. Only a single army was appointed to carry out the schemes in the west, involving among other plans a break through at Amiens.

Early in April Falkenhayn made up his mind to open an offensive in the east ; for the time being, however, he said nothing to Conrad about it, on account of Italy. And just then Conrad butted in with his Gorlice project. The German liaison general attached to Conrad's army had again and again informed him, in accordance with instructions, that no reserves were available, but despite repeated rebuffs, he decided to have another try. He felt too diffident to ask for more than four divisions. The liaison general was very dubious about his even getting that number. Falkenhayn's reply was a surprise to both of them. Instead of the four divisions asked for, he promised to send eight.

Whether Falkenhayn had been ruminating on the Gorlice idea previously or not, it was Conrad who first openly championed it. But Falkenhayn deserves great credit for giving up his own dreams about the west in order to provide the help necessary to carry out Conrad's project.

Falkenhayn, to whom, according to agreement, Conrad communicated full details of the progress of the attack in May, now decided boldly to withdraw all the forces he could possibly spare from the Western Front, and that too despite the second Artois battle. The successful outcome of this desperate gamble was soon apparent. In a few weeks the San was reached. Przemysl fell. Intoxicated by this success, Falkenhayn allowed the offensive to sweep onward. Then Lemberg was taken, and the armies of the Central Powers swept into Southern Poland.

And just at this point Falkenhayn had another fit of his congenital hesitancy. He wanted to cry halt, but Conrad and Mackensen told him pretty bluntly that they could not leave the job half finished. Falkenhayn gave way to their protests. The armies were drawn up for further dashes, and were reinforced by German divisions from the Balkans, where they were not needed.

Falkenhayn now decided to permit Hindenburg and Ludendorff to take a hand in the offensive. And forthwith there began disputes as to the part they should respectively play—disputes which lasted right through the summer campaign. The two German generals in the east had already undertaken an offensive against Courland towards the end of April by way of a surprise manœuvre. Their aim now was to take a strong drive towards Wilna, where the Russian forces were weak. Hindenburg and Ludendorff stood out for this scheme for all they were worth, while Falkenhayn favoured the less ambitious offensive on the lower reaches of the Narew. The selecting of the minor objective was just as characteristic of Falkenhayn's limited vision as his dogged persistence in it despite the fact that the difficulty soon became very obvious of storming the Russian strongholds in that marshy and flooded region. At the same time it is possible that Falkenhayn's plan of attack might have been carried out with greater vigour if Hindenburg and Ludendorff had not pushed ahead their operations in Courland.

As the causes which led to Falkenhayn's downfall and the details of his activities during the course of his "consolation" command in Roumania have been dealt with in other parts of this book, we shall now close the chapter that deals with him. With his removal from supreme command on the Western Front the power for doing mischief was considerably retrenched for the "man of half-measures."

HINDENBURG AND LUDENDORFF—THE TITANIC PAIR

THE brilliant co-operation between Hindenburg and Ludendorff and the colossal tasks which they were conjointly called upon to tackle focussed the attention of all Germany upon them during the World War, and made them the most outstanding among the generals of the Central Powers. Other instances of generals working together in pairs might be cited. There were Foch and Weygand, Diaz and Badoglio, Conrad and Metzger, but none of these pairs comprised such absolutely complementary units, and in none of them were there shown such a mutual spirit of "give and take," and such freedom from any form of friction as in the alliance of Hindenburg and Ludendorff.

Furthermore, the colossal greatness of the problems with which this pair had to cope was unique. No other generals during the course of the World War remained for such a long period in posts of responsibility amid the welter of swiftly changing momentous events, and no others were called upon, in addition to the military problems with which they were faced in various theatres of war, to co-operate in urgent decisions on matters outside the domain of strategy and tactics. Their spheres of activity extended more and more with the growing seriousness of the position of the State. But the burden of their responsibility was lightened by the feeling that both civilians and soldiers placed implicit trust in them. The people at an early stage began to regard the two as one, so to speak. When a German mentioned Hindenburg, the name of Ludendorff instinctively followed. And on the shoulders of this titanic pair the fate of Germany seemed to depend more and more as the years rolled on. All the other pillars on which

the fabric of the Empire depended were tottering under their burden. And even for Hindenburg and Ludendorff the strain eventually proved too great, and they too collapsed.

The personality of both generals was fundamentally based on similar principles. There was a peculiar similarity of temperament in these two men of absolutely dissimilar physique and appearance, and of utterly divergent paths of mental development. This accounts for the strength of the bonds that kept them together and for the different lines on which the two worked later on, while co-operating harmoniously. Both men were not only Germans, but they were Prussians in the full sense of the term. Both were not merely monarchists ; they were remarkable for their loyalty to the Hohenzollerns. Both were Conservatives, but they were well known to take no interest in party squabbings. But above all both men had in common those human traits that are invaluable in a general, the highest sense of duty, extraordinary will-power and a sense of responsibility. It is not to be wondered at that two men of such similarity of temperament were able to work together steadily, especially as they were votaries of the tenets of warfare that were taught in the school of Field-Marshal Schlieffen. Even at their first meeting in August, 1914, they were drawn to one another by feelings of mutual sympathy and regard which bound them firmly together ever afterwards. Their similarity of temperament kept in abeyance to the very end of the war any minor points of character on which they might clash.

Hindenburg, by far the older of the two, was the very embodiment of poise, calmness and strong self-reliance, a rock of granite amid a seething sea of hopes and doubts. Ludendorff was a man of almost demoniacal energy and will-power. He was forty-nine years old when the war broke out, and had an enormous capacity for work and for translating colossal plans into action. Hindenburg was sixty-seven. Gentleness, benevolence and the disposition to make allowances for the shortcomings of others, and a readiness to appreciate the outlook and the ideals of the Allies, were generous traits in Hindenburg's make-up which were naturally less pronounced in

Ludendorff. Hindenburg was a God-fearing man and a nobleman of modest and winning manners. Ludendorff was, relatively speaking, young, and was very self-reliant and self-conscious, passionate in his prejudices, and resolute in his decisions. Like Prometheus, he fought against hostile powers, which proved too formidable for him in the end. Hindenburg, like an old oak, weathered the revolutionary storm that followed the war.

To try to differentiate between their respective roles would be not only in direct opposition to their own expressed wish, but would be an almost impossible task. Even in their respective memoirs we can see evidence of their co-operation in every way. The fact that either of the two was prominently identified with any individual engagement affords no clue to the originator of the plan of that engagement. Although in his writings, the ego of Ludendorff is very pronounced, while the contrary is the case with Hindenburg, and although from 1915 onward the younger man was generally responsible alone for orders given, we invariably find Hindenburg asserting his own personality at the most decisive and critical moments. But Hindenburg was never, as some contend, a mere puppet in Ludendorff's hands. As a rule he devoted himself more to the planning and decision of big schemes, leaving the execution of the details of those schemes to the energetic and forceful Ludendorff. And, of course, Hindenburg was always only too glad to allow his more vigorous and more temperamental colleague to ginger up the politicians at home whenever the need occurred.

Hindenburg undoubtedly acted as a moderating influence on the exuberant enthusiasm of his younger colleague on many occasions. Both generals in their memoirs emphasise the fact that they always acted in co-operation with one another amidst all the varying fortunes of war. Some writers have instituted analogies between their method of co-operation and the footing that existed between Bismarck and his royal master, or between Blücher and Gneisenau. Such analogies are false, however. Hindenburg never used any pressure to bring Ludendorff round to his point of view, and there is no trace of a suggestion that Ludendorff ever attempted

to override Hindenburg's decisions. Their plans of campaign were the outcome of concerted action, while Ludendorff's titanic energy was responsible for the execution of details. And all through their joint campaigning the moral support of Hindenburg was of incalculable value for their enterprises.

In the early days of their generalship both men were only sectional leaders on the Eastern Front. But in those days the foundation of their fame was laid, as they were already acclaimed by the soldiers as national heroes. Incidentally among the civilian population the glory of Hindenburg completely eclipsed that of Ludendorff. And as the months rolled on, the two generals were regarded as the very incarnation of Germany's hope and strength. In their rise and fall they were symbolic of the rise and fall of their country.

When they went to the east in August, 1914, Ludendorff had already won renown by his brilliant coup at Liège. His experience at headquarters had taught him the importance of a speedy capture of this fortress. This brilliant achievement, taken in conjunction with his attitude towards the advocates of peace, secured him the warmest appreciation among his countrymen.

He was now called upon, in conjunction with Hindenburg, to resume offensive operations in East Prussia. People felt confidence in his volcanic energy. The previous commander in the east had contemplated a retreat across the Vistula after a first rather abortive fight against overwhelming Russian forces. He gave up this idea later on, but headquarters had lost all confidence in him. Then his successors came on the scene, and after studying their position they brought all their forces to bear against their formidable opponent in the south, following Conrad's precedent in Galicia in dealing with the enemy in the north. The opportunity was afforded of annihilating an isolated army by a double wheeling movement. With unparalleled daring they marshalled all available troops for the decisive struggle. The plan of the offensive was drawn up and executed with marvellous strategy; all obstacles, both great and small, were swept aside. The Battle of Tannenberg was fought, a classical example of consummate generalship.

Reinforcements were sent to them from the west without their having to apply for them, and the two generals proceeded with their victorious troops against the enemy on the eastern frontier, whose inert attitude had made their first victory possible. The summer battle at the Masurian Lakes was a second overwhelming victory. The demands upon the grit of the soldiers both in the battle and in the pursuit were in accordance with the exalted opinions which their leaders held about them. Their estimate was fully justified. The German army of that period was the finest military machine in the world—not in numbers, of course, but decidedly in efficiency. And both Hindenburg and Ludendorff exploited that splendid military machine to the utmost. The two first operations of those generals have been deemed by the dispassionate judgment of post-war critics to have been not only typical of the military ability of both men, but also to have been immune from the vexatious divergences of view that afterwards developed between them and Falkenhayn, the commander-in-chief.

The first reinforcements for the east were sent by Moltke on his own initiative. After the liberation of Eastern Prussia the need was urgently stressed, even in the interests of the German army itself, of giving adequate support to the Austro-Hungarian army before it was smitten with irreparable disaster. The commanders in the east were instructed by Falkenhayn to send the great portion of their troops to Upper Silesia, and thence to advance with their allies who had again taken their stand at Cracow. Their desire to make a thrust in the north, was not acceded to. The advance in October, 1914, against Iwangorod and the transfer of troops from that position to Warsaw gave rise to rather serious friction between the eastern generals and Conrad, and was the first practical test of the co-operation between the Germans and their allies. The placing of the isolated German army in Upper Silesia under Conrad's command was emphatically refused. Conrad on his side was prepared to send an army to Southern Poland, but he declined to send it further north towards Warsaw and to place it under the control of the German generals, as it

Imperial War Museum
GI NIRM VON MOITAI 1914

Imperial War Museum
CONRAD VON HOTZENDORF CHIEF OF STATE
GLEM RAI STAFF 1914



would thereby be completely removed from its own base, and would be outside the zone of his command.

As the attack of the united armies was made on the Russians while they were reorganising their forces, the first onsets of Hindenburg and Ludendorff against their disorganised masses at Iwangorod were relatively successful. Soon, however, Russian forces sallied forth from Warsaw and menaced the northern German flank. The army given by Conrad covered the German positions near Iwangorod, and Hindenburg and Ludendorff turned northwards towards Warsaw. It was merely a question of time, how long they could hold out there. The Russians, who had by this time assembled in overwhelming numbers, drove back the Germans step by step. The Russians had meanwhile assembled two armies also at Iwangorod and repelled the Austro-Hungarian division there. A retreat all along the Polish line was inevitable. It is clear that an installation of Austro-Hungarian divisions at Warsaw, instead of at Iwangorod—the step which Hindenburg and Ludendorff had so strongly urged, would have led to no better results. An utterly different method of procedure was necessary to check the onset of the Russian steam-roller.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff conjointly coped with the menace, first by withdrawing as quickly as possible the troops in Poland, destroying very thoroughly the while all the roads, and secondly by a speedy reorganisation of the German divisions, supported by reinforcements from East Prussia. Falkenhayn at this point still refused to give any reinforcements from the west. By transferring the German troops from Upper Silesia northwards towards Thorn, and filling the gaps there with an Austro-Hungarian army, the groundwork for the new plan of campaign was prepared. The Russian masses rolled slowly forward in a south-westerly direction towards Cracow and Silesia. Hindenburg and Ludendorff and Conrad were anxious to assail them on the flank. The opportunity was especially favourable for the Germans, as the north-westerly flank of the Russians was exposed. The eastern commanders were kept constantly informed about the movements of their opponents by a regular system of tapping their wireless communiques—a pro-

ceeding analogous to the key to the code of the German fleet which the Russians secured without the Germans being aware of it—a key which rendered extraordinary assistance to the English throughout the whole war.

The idea of the new Polish campaign was a brilliant one, and it was carried out efficiently. The success of the contest at Lowicz and Lodz, in view of the overwhelming superiority in numbers of the Russians, was wonderful. But just at this juncture an utterly unjustifiable tendency to underestimate the enemy—a reaction of the victories in the east—began to manifest itself. It was seen that operations against the flank of a great and compact army were not by any means as easy as against the flank of an isolated army. The Russians put up such a dogged fight that the German wing that was encircling them broke, and only by a miracle escaped being captured. Were it not for the brilliant tactics carried out by the troops and their leaders, Tannenburg would have been re-enacted, with the laurels this time for the Russian commander. But, on the whole, the lightning thrust against the Russian flank had such a far-reaching effect, that one can confidently assert that the plan of Hindenburg and Ludendorff for the annihilation of the enemy's army on a large scale would have been successful, had the divisions which turned up too late from the Western Front been despatched at the crucial moment when they were required. This was the psychological moment when Falkenhayn, although he was perfectly aware of the futility of his Ypres offensive, still hesitated about sending along reinforcements to the Eastern Front. The makeshift auxiliary forces hurriedly levied by Hindenburg and Ludendorff from the German fortress garrisons with extraordinary resourcefulness and foresight, could not compensate for the lack of these reinforcements. The divisions drafted from the Western Front arrived piecemeal and far too late, and could not make any headway against the swarming divisions of Russians massing up at Warsaw. Already the Eastern Front began to form one compact line. Stationary warfare here, too, had superseded the warfare of movement, since neither side was sufficiently strong to manœuvre in the open. The subsequent battles in front

of Warsaw were protracted and entailed heavy losses, and it is doubtful whether the attacks of the Germans were justified by the results. One important objective, however, was attained. Silesia and Posen were saved for good from the menace of being swamped by Russia.

When towards the end of 1914 and early in 1915 fresh divisions were available in Germany, the eastern commanders asked that they should be sent to them as reinforcements. Unfortunately Hindenburg and Ludendorff, as well as Conrad, had evolved a plan, the colossal scope of which would require forces far in excess of those at the disposal of the Central Powers. They contemplated "pinching-out" at its two eastern extremities the huge salient formed by the Russian positions stretching from East Prussia to Russian Poland, and right through the latter country along the line of the Carpathians, with a view to staging a "super-Sedan" for the Russians. Of course each of the commanders was influenced by consideration for his own country's interests in projecting this scheme. Conrad was intent on the relief of Przemysl, while Hindenburg and Ludendorff aimed at the liberation of the East Prussian frontier. The scheme failed to materialise to the satisfaction of both the Germans and the Austro-Hungarians. Conrad led the greater part of his forces, reinforced by something between three and four divisions placed at his disposal by Hindenburg and Ludendorff, to costly but futile battles among the snow-covered Carpathians, while the German leaders had at their own disposal an army equal in strength to the one that afterwards fought at Gorlice. The winter battles in the Masurian region liberated East Prussia once more, it is true, and a simple outflanking of the isolated north Russian wing, carried out in conjunction with a break through, brought in its train the capture of an enormous number of prisoners and colossal booty, but it was absolutely barren of any real strategic result. The strongly fortified Russian line along the Niemen was an obstacle that must have been obviously impregnable from the very outset. And so in exchange for a relatively trivial result the second great opportunity in the Russian campaign after the battle at Lodz was thrown away, and a further portion of the scanty German reserves was

rendered almost useless. It is only fair, however, to lay the blame for the unfortunate selection of their basis of attack not on the shoulders of Falkenhayn alone, but also on those of the eastern commanders.

During the period between the beginning of February and the end of April, 1918, fiercely contested battles were waged along the firmly held front line to the south of East Prussia. But the attacks carried out by the far more numerous Russians with dogged determination failed to protect the entrenched positions on the Narew and the Bug from direct attack by the Germans.

The Gorlice offensive which had been arranged for May, only entailed at first mere tentative attacks by Hindenburg and Ludendorff. And it was at this point that the first indications were seen of the scheme which was destined to lead to fresh and bitter conflicts of opinion with Falkenhayn. The only part of the front at that time that was not firmly entrenched was the Memel region. And here the two eastern commanders in addition to the feint manœuvres which had been assigned to them made a dash for Courland along the Riga-Petrograd line which the Russians had during the whole war regarded as a key position, and placed the northern flank of the Russian army drawn up on the East Prussian frontier in a very perilous position. At first, however, through lack of sufficient forces the Germans had merely local and abortive successes. But when in the middle of July the Hindenburg and Ludendorff front launched the summer campaign, the two commanders carried out an offensive in a south-easterly direction from the lower reaches of the Niemen, and captured Kovno, thereby endangering the Russian line of retreat, and holding forth the menace of disaster to the greater part of the Russian army. Owing to the success of the Gorlice offensive the position had now considerably altered in comparison with the state of things in February, the time of the winter battles in the Masurian lakeland region. The scheme no longer seemed to be one of impossible dimensions. Falkenhayn nevertheless turned it down, and so did the Kaiser, whose intervention the two commanders individually invoked. Falkenhayn gave orders for a dash across the lower reaches of the Narew, as he considered

that such a manœuvre would give promise of immediate and definite relief to Mackensen who was fighting against great odds, and whose Gorlice attack had apparently fizzled out. Hindenburg and Ludendorff made thorough preparations for the Narew offensive, and within eight days the two Russian fortresses there capitulated to the Germans. Nevertheless the victory over the forces entrenched along the river and over the reinforcements hurriedly rushed up by the Russians took up so much time that they failed to pinch out the enemy in the little salient to the west of the position of the German thrust.

Simultaneously the two eastern commanders with their dwindling available forces, and, so to speak, on their own initiative, had reinforced the little army in Courland, where they started the offensive, handicapped as they were. Their manœuvre served the purpose of drawing off an entire Russian army to that region, thereby rendering great service by relieving the tension on the Narew and on Mackensen's front. Incidentally they proved that along that front it was possible to attain great objectives with scanty resources, and that their scheme held forth far greater promise of success than Falkenhayn's did.

Once more, after they had won their victory on the Narew and had completed the task assigned to them there, Hindenburg and Ludendorff asked for reinforcements and also for approval for their great scheme for a drive across Kovno against the communication lines of the Russian army. But both approval of their scheme and reinforcements were given in a half-hearted way only. Falkenhayn considered that sufficient success had already been attained in the east ; his mind was intent on Serbia and on the west. The slender forces available at Kovno had to be held in readiness for speedy transfer to another theatre of war. The tragedy of the Battle of Lodz was repeated. The meagre forces of Hindenburg and Ludendorff after the capture of the fortress of Kovno attained a great victory over the Russians, who were completely taken unawares ; encircling manœuvres were carried out. But once more the Russians rallied with overwhelmingly superior forces. The Germans had spent their strength ; they failed to complete their enveloping tactics, and so

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their great victory was barren of results. In this case, too, as in November, 1914, it was clear what results could be attained had reinforcements come up in time. And meanwhile German divisions remained for a considerable time inactive on Mackensen's sector. In vain, too, did Conrad place an entire army at the disposal of the German commanders in the east with a view to liberating further German divisions. This army he subsequently used for the ill-fated thrust at Kovno. However, the German Eastern Front had, almost in opposition to Falkenhayn's wish, pushed its lines far deeper eastward than had been originally intended. Riga and Dunaburg were in imminent peril. Courland with important railway lines fell into German hands.

It was only the two first engagements in the summer of 1914 that fully attained the objective aimed at by Hindenburg and Ludendorff. All the subsequent operations, the two Polish campaigns of 1914 and the great summer campaign of 1915, as well as the winter fighting in the Mansurian Lake region, were only semi-successes. The brilliant field operations were barren of result despite all the anxious care of the general and despite magnificent achievements by the army. The tasks that had to be faced were far too strenuous for the forces available, and the efforts to achieve something definite completely failed, and frequently led to perilous situations. The same ill-luck seemed to dog Hindenburg and Ludendorff as had been Conrad's fate. Like him they aimed at great objectives, and failed just when the goal was in sight. Falkenhayn's failure to send along reinforcements was the cause of many abortive schemes in the east. The worst blow that the Central Powers received after the Battle of the Marne, was their failure to give Russia her death-blow in the heavy fighting of 1914 and 1915.

The German commanders in the east spent the end of 1915 and the beginning of 1916 in establishing control over the conquered areas. They regarded these lands as German settlements and protectorates, and considered that the consolidation of their position in them was one of the most important of the objectives of the war. With the spring of 1916 violent Russian offensives, which were made on the Eastern Front with a view to

relieving the pressure on the French at Verdun, were repelled by the Germans despite the fact that their forces, slender as they had been, had been considerably reduced by Falkenhayn's attitude. At that period there stood on the German Eastern Front only forty-four German and two Austro-Hungarian divisions as against eighty-three Russian divisions. Of course it could hardly be expected that the Western Front, which was barely holding its own in defensive tactics, could afford to spare any reinforcements worth talking of. But hard pressed as they were themselves, Hindenburg and Ludendorff gave every available man they could spare to hold up the Brussilov offensive. At the end of July, as a pledge of confidence in them, the command over the greater part of the Eastern Front from Riga to Lemberg was conferred on them.

Although the campaigns in Russia since October, 1914, had only been partially successful, they had entailed magnificent strategic exploits, the capture of large quantities of booty and the acquisition of great stretches of territory. For the abortive nature of these campaigns—even for the very choice of the base of attack in the winter fighting in the Masurian Lake region the eastern commanders were to blame. And yet during the first two years of the war the name of Hindenburg was on everybody's lips. He had been the general in Germany's greatest and most spectacular battles, and fortune had favoured his standard. The initiated were also aware, of course, of Ludendorff's prominent share in all these glories. But the civilian population gave all the honour for the achievements in the east to Hindenburg alone. When the anxiety of the Central Powers was at its very tensest, when the Battles of the Somme and of Verdun raged in the west, when in Italy Gorizia had fallen, and when the Eastern Front from Pripet to the Carpathians blazed and trembled, and when, to cap all, Roumania entered the war, there was a unanimous demand that Hindenburg and Ludendorff should take over supreme command. They alone seemed capable of setting everything right ; they were the greatest and the best reserve army of the Central Powers. Powerful interests and outstanding individuals had again and again long previously

combined to press for their immediate appointment. Yet it was all in vain. Now, however, the danger was too great, and it was felt that no effort should remain untried to avert disaster swift and irreparable, which was impending. On August 29th, 1916, the day after Roumania had entered the war, the Kaiser, the army, and the people placed their destinies in perfect confidence in the trust of these two men. It was a gesture parallel in significance to the appointment of Foch as generalissimo in March, 1918, as the last hope of saving the Allies from imminent doom in the Great War.

The very first deeds of the two men showed that they were determined to end the run of ill-luck that was dogging the German army. Their appointment was made of course in a much less dramatic fashion than that of Foch later on. Conrad's position with regard to the change was, however, somewhat analogous to that of Haig relative to Foch. By the intervention of the old Austrian Emperor, a *via media* was found through a rather awkward impasse. For Austria-Hungary, the most important member of the Quadruple Alliance, a similar right of protest was arranged to that conceded later on in the case of the commanders of the Allies with regard to Foch's orders. In reality this ordinance was abrogated in the beginning of 1917, as at that date the young Austrian Kaiser himself took over command, and consequently the German supreme command actually lost its controlling power though it still nominally held it. The second important decision of the new commanders was the cessation of the Verdun battle which was just smouldering aimlessly, and had long since failed to attain its objective.

A remarkable innovation, which in the extraordinary circumstances prevailing was bound to be beneficial, was Ludendorff's success in his demand that Hindenburg and himself should have full responsibility with regard to the appointment of a headquarters staff. Apart from the German Emperor, who during the entire war had as a matter of principle kept in the background as much as possible, the German army had now a dual, and yet a unified control. The one disadvantage attached to the new arrangement was that in the German army the

power of the headquarters staff, which was already rather autocratic in its dealings with the generals in the field, became more strongly entrenched owing to Ludendorff's temperamental tendency to place more weight on the views of the chief of staff than on those of senior campaigning generals. In this bias towards the views of headquarters, when they clashed with those of the generals, Ludendorff was rather injudicious.

After the problem of unified command and that of the winding-up of the Verdun battle, the next biggest job was the evolution of a new type of defensive tactics, i.e. the so-called elastic system which was initiated in 1918 by Pétain and Diaz. It was a colossal task, whose compass could be gauged by military experts alone, as in its execution it involved a radical change in the manœuvring of the entire army. The first experiments in the system were made with great success at the Battle of the Somme.

The fourth big task was the conduct of the campaign against Roumania, in connection with which the new unified command of the Central Powers underwent its first great test. The plans which had already been partly arranged by Falkenhayn, Conrad and the Bulgarians were completed, and the divisions needed for their execution were literally conjured up as if by magic. Everywhere new units were created along the fighting lines, a masterly achievement of organisation unparalleled in any other army during the course of the Great War. And each one of these achievements of Hindenburg and Ludendorff was of the greatest significance.

The two great commanders attained a still greater victory without any conscious effort on their own part—the almost incredible psychological effect of their appointment on the army and on their fellow countrymen. Even the army on the Western Front which was far removed from their sphere of operations, and which was in the throes of a bitter engagement on the Somme, acquired a sudden accession of strength and confidence. Every soldier felt that he was fighting with two men at his back who would guarantee him victory. All Germany and Austria-Hungary, too, took heart of grace and felt stronger for the fray. Rarely was an appointment of

such portentousness as that of Hindenburg and Ludendorff in August, 1916, made with such dramatic suddenness ; never was an appointment of its type so justified both on the grounds of psychology and on those of its military results.

While the tasks we have just mentioned involved Herculean efforts on the part of the two commanders, especially as they had to be carried out in the course of a few weeks and with the utmost speed while the enemy were carrying on a violent offensive, they were faced at the very outset of their new range of activity with problems which really lay outside the zone of their military operations, in the decision of which, however, their views were bound to have a telling effect, not only owing to their high position, but also owing to their moral influence and their authority. On the other hand, amidst the many eventful happenings which occurred in connection with the conduct of the war in England, never was an almost exclusively political question affected appreciably by the attitude of the generals towards it. And in France still less was the opinion of the military leaders asked in political matters. The civilian authorities would always be only too conscious of the relative value of the views of the commander-in-chief on any given problem—views, that with a sense of loyalty to his own sphere, would be affected by considerations of the military aspect of the question. Unfortunately the Germans did not look upon the matter in this light. The wavering Imperial Chancellor was only too glad to make use of the prestige that the two generals enjoyed to bolster up his own decisions.

The first non-military problem with which Hindenburg and Ludendorff were faced, was that of the proclamation of a Kingdom in Russian-Poland. Before the two generals had been appointed the German Government had actually decided upon this step. Hindenburg and Ludendorff, however, deprecated the proclamation on the ground that it would lead to the Governor-General of Warsaw equipping a large Polish army. It was a grave error on the part of the two generals to forecast such a result. Conrad did not share their view.

The second question was that of overtures for peace by

the Central Powers. In connection with this, too, the two commanders looked at the problem from a strictly military point of view. They demanded that such overtures should not be made at a moment when things went badly in the field, and consequently not before the end of the Roumanian campaign. Furthermore, they deprecated the broaching of the question to the Allies in such a manner as would suggest actual weakness.

The *morale* of the German army was in no wise affected by the peace overtures. The results showed that the attitude of Hindenburg and Ludendorff was fully justified from a military point of view. The peace overtures were regarded in political circles, both by the enemy and by neutrals, as tantamount to a confession of weakness, and consequently failed in their object. None of the Western democracies followed Germany's precedent in this respect.

The third great problem was that of submarine warfare. In viewing it, too, we find the generals adhering strictly to the bounds of their own domain. They had taken over supreme command, as already pointed out, at a time when things looked very black for the Central Powers from a military point of view. The German Admiralty just then believed, to judge by the expressed views of all the leading naval men, that it had in the "U"-boats a device for reducing Great Britain to a state of famine in a comparatively short time, and thereby winning the war. We have only to read the testimony on oath of President Wilson before the Commission of Inquiry held by the American Senate to be convinced of this. In his evidence President Wilson declared that even if there had been no submarine warfare, America would have entered the war. It is difficult to decide to what extent the submarine hastened America's entry into the war, or rather gave the warmongers their trump card. Hindenburg and Ludendorff were correct in their estimate that America would require a year to take the field in Europe with an army of any consequence.

An important point to be considered, too, was the fact that a declaration of war by America was not to be expected before the date of the appointment of a new President. This allowed in addition to the year that

would be needed to build up the army and to transport it to Europe, a period of eighteen months. On the other hand, the German naval authorities calculated that the submarine campaign would most decidedly be in full swing within six months.

On this latter point Hindenburg and Ludendorff were naturally not in a position to express any definite views. They felt, however, that allowing for any margin of miscalculation they might back the chances of a submarine campaign reaching its peak in six months against the effectiveness of an American army which would not be fit to take the field before eighteen months. Seeing that, furthermore, the outlook with regard to the war on land in August, 1916, was quite favourable, the two generals made up their minds to back the submarine campaign. A very serious miscalculation on the part of the politicians, however, prevented the immediate putting of their decision into action. They feared, and without any reason for doing so, a declaration of war by Holland and Denmark—a contingency with which they could not cope in the field before the overthrow of Roumania. For this reason the declaration of the submarine war was not made until February 1st, 1917. By this dallying policy half a year of very precious time was thrown away. The American Presidential Election was over, and the period between the prospective entrance of appreciable American forces and the effective operation of the submarines was

incredible extent. Both these factors very seriously hampered the full effectiveness of U-boat warfare. Owing to the unforeseen dropping out of Russia, however, which had at that time been a force in the field equivalent in numbers to the entire German army, just after the submarine campaign started, there was an improvement in the position of the warfare on land. And this event fundamentally altered the second hypothesis attached to the decision of Hindenburg and Ludendorff with regard to the submarine campaign—i.e. military exigencies in the field.

In addition to all these vital questions, really altogether outside their own domain, in which they were involved during the first months of their command, there was also the stupendous task of definitely and systematically enlisting the entire resources of the country for the furtherance of the war. In addition to moral and strategic factors the only weapon that made it possible to keep up the fight against superior forces was effective mechanical warfare. The so-called Hindenburg programme, which the two generals evolved, was a brilliantly conceived, magnificent precursor of the scheme drawn up by the French in the summer of 1917. But owing to the mental tonic that it gave to the nation and owing to the systematic apportioning of work it was possible to maintain the heavy fighting during the next year against the organised armaments of the whole world. If in many respects the system of dragooning the civilian population was carried out rather intensively, it was, under the circumstances, an error on the right side.

Certainly it would be unfair to blame Hindenburg and Ludendorff for the failure of the Reichstag to check appreciably abuses in connection with the war such as occurred in all the belligerent nations—war profiteering, high wages for workmen in comparison with the soldiers, and exemption of alleged “indispensable handicraftsmen” from service in the field.

There never was any suggestion that the two generals exercised undue pressure in matters outside the bounds of their own military sphere. In fact, when one considers the great prestige of both men, it would have been better for Germany had they not confined themselves so literally

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merely to the carrying-out of the Hindenburg programme. What intervention they did exercise outside their own domain was most decidedly for the good of the nation.

During the first five months of their command Hindenburg and Ludendorff had already achieved a series of successes in many realms of command, the victory over Roumania, the Battle of the Somme, their stand against the Brussilov offensive, their new defensive tactics, the moral stimulus they gave their wavering nation, the Hindenburg programme, the overtures for peace, the Polish problem, and the promotion of the submarine campaign—such were some of the many great tasks with which they had to cope in a very short space of time—tasks such as no other commanders in the Great War had to tackle. And such intervention as they showed in non-military spheres was necessary owing to the weakness of the Government, the disorganisation of the Reichstag, the aloofness of the Kaiser, and the pathetic confidence of the army in its two great commanders. Both men did their best to approach from the strictly military point of view any civilian question on which they were asked to express their views. Indeed, it was only too evident that it was with great reluctance that they interfered at all in spheres which were not only uncongenial to their temperament, but for which they were utterly unsuited. And yet in those very non-military spheres of activity their views constantly carried most weight, as the Kaiser, the Imperial Chancellor, the Reichstag, and the heads of the constituent states of the Empire wobbled and dallied more and more as the days

return for teeming millions in gold. Even the Serbian and Roumanian armies had risen again—as though from the dead.

The construction of the famous "Hindenburg line" completely dislocated the plans for a great Allied offensive. By a masterly strategic withdrawal the two generals straightened out their straggling, indented line, taking care before removing to their new firmly entrenched quarters to leave a great zone of utter desolation in their wake. A pathetic attempt was made at the time to represent the withdrawal of the Germans to the "Hindenburg line" as a British victory. It was, however, the result of a brain-wave of strategy on the part of Hindenburg and Ludendorff. Their new front was infinitely easier to man and to maintain than the old zig-zag line that trailed from Arras to Soissons, not to mention the awkward Sommecourt hump. The only adverse criticism that some post-war writers have made about the "Hindenburg line" scheme was that, while the exigencies of war demanded that before retirement from their old line the Germans should leave a desert between it and their new quarters, the wreckage wrought by them was too utterly wanton and reckless.

Meanwhile on the Eastern Front, the Russian Revolution, that epoch-making event that seemed at the time destined to decide the war in favour of the Central Powers, broke out. That put an end to the menace in the east; the giant on that front had now been shown to have feet of clay. After a conference with the Imperial Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg, Hindenburg and Ludendorff decided to ground arms and watch developments. No matter how great the temptation might be from a military point of view, the generals were resolved not to revive the sinking *morale* of the Russian troops by provocative action. It was perhaps one of the greatest of the numerous blunders during the war on the part of the Government that no direct overtures towards peace were made—but for this Hindenburg and Ludendorff were not to blame. They were both quite prepared to end the war with Russia. In January, 1917, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs remarked in reference to Ludendorff's suggestions that Germany should give up

all claims about the annexation of Belgium: "Ludendorff does not know yet whether he has the right to sell this horse." There were no great risks, however, attendant on the effort, which met with the approval of Hindenburg and Ludendorff, to undermine the *morale* of the Russians by propaganda at the front and thereby to bring about peace. The German troops were bound to be somewhat infected in the process. At that period German resources in contrast to those of the Allies, were running short in almost every sphere, and the gamble for the chance of getting rid of the Russian front seemed worth while, especially in view of the still-unshaken *morale* of the German army.

Immediately after the outbreak of the Russian Revolution, and the failure of the great French offensive, serious disturbances broke out in the French army. Thanks to the phenomenal discipline of the nation, which was especially shown by the Press and by the Chamber of Deputies, the Germans never heard about this crisis, which they might have exploited with great advantage. The incident was one of the rare instances during the Great War of a secret which was rigidly kept from the enemy. It also showed that the German Intelligence Department, which, broadly speaking, was as brilliant as German diplomacy was stupid, had missed a splendid chance.

Before the Russian Revolution Hindenburg and Ludendorff were faced with an almost insuperable crisis in the field which forced them to suggest the opening of a ruthless submarine campaign as the only solution of the difficulty. This crisis had evolved directly from the half-hearted policy of Falkenhayn, who took no proper steps to put any of the enemy nations completely out of action when he had the opportunity of doing so. Statistics speak eloquently, and the tabulated statement on page 65 gives an estimate of the total number of divisions in the field on both sides at the end of March in 1915, 1916 and 1917 respectively.

There were fourteen Russian and nine British divisions in Asia in March, 1917, against forty Turkish divisions, which in strength were equal at most to twenty Allied divisions.



Imperial War Museum

GENERAL VON FALKENHAYN ON THE ROUMANIAN FRONT
WITH HIS CHIEF OF STAFF

	1915	1916	1917	
ch 31				
any . .	151	161	228	
ia-Hungary .	61	73	83	
ria . .	-	12	14	
ay . .	-	-	6	
al Powers .	212	246	331 (total of forces in Europe)	
a . .	112	135	218	
e . .	93	111	118	
Britain .	16	51	68	
. . .	-	48	65	
z . . .	13	-	6	
im . . .	6	6	6	
enegro . . .	4	-	Portugal 2	
iania . . .	-	-	15	
· . . .	244	351	498 (total of forces in Europe)	

superiority in length . . . 15 per cent 40 per cent 50 per cent

The total figures of the respective forces show a progressive increase in numbers on the part of the Allies. So in March, 1915, and perhaps even in March, 1916, it seemed feasible for the Central Powers to cope with the superior forces by more efficient artillery and better tactics; the overwhelming superiority of the Allies in instruments as well as in numbers began to be more and more formidable in 1917. It was just at this critical juncture that the Russian Revolution seemed once more to afford the opportunity of getting rid of the menace of the Eastern Front. At first every effort was made, in accordance with Bethmann-Hollweg's idea, not to "harm" the Russians. No attack was made on their country which was disintegrating more and more daily. After the lapse of some months, however, it was noticed

Kerensky had consolidated his position more and more every day, and made strong professions of friendliness to the Western Powers. Nivelle's great offensive fizzled out, and both the British and the French were dismasted after their abortive attacks. And although the real seriousness of the prostration of the French was known in detail to the Germans, at any rate they were convinced that a profound depression had ensued

as a reaction of the collapse of the "final offensive" which had been started with such high hopes. It seems very extraordinary that Hindenburg and Ludendorff should have allowed two months to elapse, i.e. from the middle of May to the middle of July, without availing themselves of the splendid chances offered to them in Russia, Italy and France. Each of these three armies was then decayed at the core, and a determined offensive, such as was made at a later date in East Galicia and Italy, would have smashed either of the three into smithereens. Yet Hindenburg and Ludendorff let the most precious and favourable weeks of the year slip by. We know to-day that the Allies with ever-increasing dread were waiting from day to day for the great German offensive that never came. Instead of starting that offensive Hindenburg and Ludendorff allowed the eternally dallying Bethmann-Hollweg to keep them idle in the east. In the case of Italy the new Austro-Hungarian commander Arz did not follow up the scheme arranged by his predecessor Conrad for a concerted offensive, as both he and the Germans looked upon the war there more in the light of a private concern of Austria-Hungary. In the case of France the trouble was that they had not the faintest conception about the favourable opportunity they were missing. It seems a thousand pities that the two great generals remained at this psychological moment utterly inactive after their splendid record and after the important part they had played in momentous happenings and decisions since August, 1916. Probably they were playing a waiting game, as they felt that the decisive blow in the war was to be struck by the submarines. Were it not for this, with their dynamic energy they would most certainly have succeeded in rousing the German army to launch a shattering offensive. It was only when a *reductio ad absurdum* was made of the Imperial Chancellor's Russian policy by Kerensky's attack, and when the German Admiralty did not make good its grandiose promises, that the two giants awoke again from their torpor.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff took no part in the great political happenings in the summer of 1917—the Reichstag's Peace Resolution, and the Pope's plea for peace.

Their expressed attitude and their views with regard to peace overtures and especially with regard to the aims of Germany in the war were known in official circles, and in view of the state of affairs they carried such weight that it is well to summarise them here in order to form a proper estimate of the character and aims of the two generals, who were of one mind on this issue, as on all others. The German Imperial Chancellor, Bethmann, contrary to the policy of the heads of the enemy countries, had neglected to publish the German war objectives, and thereby had decidedly committed a grave psychological error. His blunder was aggravated by the fact that the discussion of war aims by the Press was totally forbidden until the end of 1916, and afterwards was only tentatively permitted. Consequently there was no inspiring war-cry for the Germans, while the secret squabbings over this issue, in addition to other grievances, fomented internal dissensions through the Empire. The war aims of Hindenburg and Ludendorff, i.e. the establishment of German spheres of influence among the Russian frontier states, the establishment of protectorates in Poland, the establishment of spheres of influence and the provision of guarantees in Belgium, could only be realised after a victory in the field. But such was the contingency too attendant on the war aims of the Allies, which were announced officially, and stirred up the enthusiasm of the masses. And these aims, which were emphasised again and again amidst all the varying fortunes of the war, were the annexation by France of Alsace-Lorraine and the Saar, the crippling of Germany's industrial life, the seizure of her colonies, the acquisition of Constantinople as well as dominance over the Slavonic peoples by Russia, and, finally, the annexation of the Adriatic coast and of South Tyrol by the Italians. Hindenburg and Ludendorff, by emphasising their war aims, were simply following the psychologically successful tactics of the Allies.

Still the German Government could not summon up courage to make a definite statement on the point. They failed to express themselves officially either for the principle of a defensive war and the maintenance of the *status quo*, or for the opposite policy. As was the case in

so many other emergencies that they had to face, they did absolutely nothing. The result was that, incredible as it may seem, the German people were, officially speaking, fighting for no purpose. The bleak outlook for the people, what with indefiniteness of war aims, profiteering, smuggling, famine, shortage of coal, clothing and other necessities of life, divergences of opinion among the personnel of the Government and chaos in the Reichstag, was further intensified by the problem of the General Election in Prussia. The Kaiser's message at Easter, 1917, postponed the settlement of the question of a universal suffrage until after the war, and gave rise to doubts as to its being carried out if a victory in the field culminated in a consolidation of the power of the ruling classes. Hindenburg and Ludendorff took a wrong attitude in this vexed political question, as their antecedents and environment coloured their views as to the relative electoral rights of a Prussian soldier and those of a combatant in any of the confederate states. Still it is doubtful if the assumption of any other attitude by them would have done any good at the time. They succeeded in bringing about the downfall of the vacillating Imperial Chancellor in July, 1917—an achievement which they aimed at not through political ambition, which was quite foreign to their nature, but through an honest, conscientious belief that Bethmann-Hollweg was absolutely unsuited for his job, and consequently was a menace alike to the welfare of the nation and the prospect of victory in the field.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff had all along been unsuccessful in their effort to secure an increase of pay for the soldiers, whose wages, relative to those of civilian workers, were appallingly wretched. They were equally unsuccessful after the fall of Bethmann-Hollweg, as his successors followed up his negative policy. The concurrence of Hindenburg and Ludendorff with the attitude adopted by Germany regarding the Russian Revolution—a policy that was in accordance with Bethmann-Hollweg's temperament, their acquiescence in the Reichstag's "Peace Resolution," and finally their very failure to bring pressure to bear regarding the carrying out of important sections of the Hindenburg programme—all these facts

showed how deliberately they kept within the limits of their own spheres of activity, and how easy it would have been for a courageous, strong-willed statesman to lead the German people with their co-operation as military advisers. But the representatives of the people failed to cope with the Hindenburg programme as they failed in the case of the electoral problem—as they failed, in fact, in all domains of domestic and foreign politics. The Kaiser and the Imperial Chancellors were equally unsuccessful. Yet the glamour of their victories in the field steadily enhanced the veneration and love of the people for the two generals, whom they regarded as pillars of strength to the Empire. Still as they were merely great soldiers and had neither aptitude nor taste for politics, Germany was left without competent statesmen in her hour of need.

July, 1917, brought a surprising change on the Eastern Front, as Kerensky succeeded in rousing the Russian army to take up the offensive once more. Local successes by the Russians forced Hindenburg and Ludendorff to give up their policy of deliberate inactivity on this front, and by a vigorous counter-offensive to make it plain to the Russian army that any further attacks on their side were bound to be futile. Without any very elaborate preparations, a splendid victory was attained in East Galicia, which entailed the evacuation of the last bit of occupied Austrian territory. It was a victory which completely attained both its military and political objectives. Henceforth the Russian army was utterly crippled and hurtled helplessly to its doom.

Meanwhile the heavy fighting in Flanders had started. For months the unremitting carnage continued on a scale rivalling the horrors of the Somme and Verdun. The new elastic system of defensive tactics was being tested. The only tangible result for the English was the winning of a few miles of ground after both the combatants were utterly exhausted. The position was considerably relieved, however, by the fact that the French army, although it attained some significant local successes, was left absolutely too crippled to face a big offensive again. Two great achievements seemed very probable in the near future—peace on the Eastern Front and victory

on the Western Front before the Americans were ready to join in.

Another great probability was in sight—the complete elimination of Italy from the number of Germany's enemies. This would permit the concentration of all the German forces for a smashing victory in the west.

In the eleventh Isonzo battle the Italians had at last achieved some minor successes, which attained undue prominence owing to the close proximity of Trieste to the front line. The scheme for an attack at Tolmino and Caporetto, that had been concerted between Conrad and Hindenburg and Ludendorff in January, 1917, was resumed in September, 1917, and its execution definitely decided upon. The carefully planned and thorough artillery prelude, the manner in which the attack came as a surprise for the enemy, the splendid fighting of the shock army, composed of eight Austro-Hungarian and seven German picked divisions, ensured an overwhelming triumph over an enemy that was already utterly demoralised. The Central Powers had won one of their greatest victories. Unfortunately the effect of a great achievement was marred by two grave errors, for which the two commanders alone were to blame. The entire campaign from the very start was not considered by Hindenburg and Ludendorff as of primary significance. From their point of view it was nothing more than "a subsidiary and unavoidable relief expedition" in aid of an ally that was once more in difficulties. They expressed a hope that they might penetrate as far as the Tagliamento, but they had no aims beyond this. Italy remained what it had always been in the eyes of the new leaders, and as it had previously been in Falkenhayn's eyes, a minor theatre of war in the sense that all the forces there had to be limited to the irreducible minimum. The principle of securing complete freedom for the fight in the west by getting rid of the enemy on the Eastern Front, for which the two generals strove so earnestly, was not consistently adhered to in the case of Italy.

Marshalling reinforcements of eight picked German divisions, a larger force than they had left to deal with Italy, they captured Riga. This was probably a psychological reaction from the inactivity of previous months.

It had no significance, except perhaps in a subsidiary political sense, as the German people visualised the feat as the capture of the capital of one of their future settlements. But from a military point of view the operation was absolutely of no consequence, as the Russians had, at any rate, utterly collapsed already. Eight German divisions had been firmly entrenched in this region for two years. These eight divisions, by means of an offensive immediately after the thrust that was actually made, might have completely wiped out in the grandest "Schlieffen" style the Italian army in the South Tyrol. But even then it is very questionable whether the Italians would have sued for peace. And so the position was that the Germans had not acquired the complete freedom so urgently needed to devote all their energies to a great offensive in the west, before the Americans made their position hopeless there. There was even still only the semblance of peace on the Eastern Front. Small forces had to be maintained there as in Italy to keep at bay an enemy who had been put out of action, but who had not, for all that, completely quitted the field.

Yet another mistake of a similar tendency was committed, which affected the German commanders only indirectly, but affected the Austro-Hungarian commander, Arz, directly. Neither of the two interested themselves in the transport to the South Tyrol of the serried German divisions which were drawn up on the old Isonzo front where they were no longer needed. Had they done so, they might have made good to a certain extent their mistake regarding Riga. Successes were achieved, but nothing was done in the way of following them up and exploiting them fully. The Italian attack was as great a surprise to the Central Powers as the Brussilov offensive was to the Russians. Both Hindenburg and Ludendorff reacted perhaps too much to the attitude of the German army and the German people, who took little interest in the proceedings in Italy, and regarded the fighting on that front rather in the light of a private affair between Austria-Hungary and a rather negligible enemy. They did not regard the campaign as really having any direct bearing on the common war programme of the Central Powers.

But apart altogether from the question of Italy, a quick determined thrust on the Western Front with the magnificent storm divisions of Riga—a thrust somewhat on the lines of the thrust which Hindenburg and Ludendorff actually made as a reply to the remarkable victory that followed an English surprise attack at Cambrai, would have had a great psychological reaction on the hard-pressed German front and on the civilian population who were appalled by the sacrifices endured during the protracted attrition campaigns of the last year. The French had also inflicted minor reverses on the Germans at Verdun and at Chemin des Dames, which had an extraordinary effect on the *morale* of their army. And so ended the year 1917 with discordant notes which, however, were drowned by the triumphal march of the Austro-German divisions in Italy and Russia.

When the Russian armistice was definitely ratified at German headquarters, the two generals could conscientiously claim that they had been instrumental in undermining the might of Russia and wearing down her colossal armies with their smashing victories. And now that Russia was out of the game, mainly owing to the great achievements of Hindenburg and Ludendorff, the entire strategic position had fundamentally changed for the Central Powers—and definitely changed in their favour. The Americans, inexperienced as they were in warfare, could never fill the yawning gap left by the departure of the colossal, patiently slogging, dogged Russian hosts.

The peace negotiations with Russia entailed the dramatic intervention of Hindenburg and Ludendorff on two occasions. On the first occasion they insisted, under a threat of resumption of hostilities, on the annexation of a protectorate zone in Poland with 2,000,000 inhabitants. Their frontier state policy had already been approved of. No doubt Foch and Pershing at a later date would have acted likewise, had they not found tougher statesmen and politicians than themselves in Wilson and Clemenceau. The German Government endorsed their action, although many leading men, including military advisers, considered that a protectorate zone with 100,000 inhabitants was adequate.

The second dramatic act of the two generals was their definite declaration of the armistice, which put an end to the dilatory long-winded negotiations of the Russians—negotiations which were deliberately prolonged and which reacted on the *morale* of the troops and were a definite menace to the success of the offensive on the Western Front. Within the space of eight days everything was settled, and the war on the Eastern Front was at an end. Both these actions on the part of the two generals were rather unfortunate, the first one from the practical point of view of the inevitable consequences of the incorporation of a discontented civilian populace and of the deadly enmity of the Poles, the second because it over-emphasised the menace of a peace dictated at the point of the bayonet. It certainly showed very clearly once more how utterly incapable the politicians of the Central Powers were to end the disastrous wrangling and bargaining, and to strike a definite and final peace pact on the Eastern Front.

The Reichstag approved of the arrangement for peace in the east; the question of war aims remained, in spite of the Imperial decree of 1917, and in spite of the confirmation of its terms in the beginning of 1918, which disclaimed any suggestion of acquisition of territory on the western frontier, as yet quite indefinite. From the point of view of internal politics, the disastrous effects of this indefiniteness became more and more evident daily. The internal position of Germany in the beginning of 1918 was in pathetic contrast to its prospects in the field. The nation centred all its faith and hope in Hindenburg and Ludendorff. They were the last, but also the firmest bulwarks of the army and the Fatherland.

In spite of—nay, on account of this internal chaotic state of affairs, which became worse and worse as the days went by, Hindenburg and Ludendorff made preparations with all their available forces for the 1918 campaign on the Western Front. A military victory alone could turn the tide in their favour after the failure both of the submarine warfare and the blunders of the politicians—it alone could save the German nation from the greatest defeat it had encountered in its history. Fully realising the desperate position of their country, the two

generals decided on a great offensive. The nerves of the German army on the Western Front were frayed by their defensive campaign, which had spread over a whole year, during which their own heavy losses were all the more depressing as they saw no visible indications of any success. Even the trivial gains obtained by the enemy towards the end of 1917 were ominous hints of what was in store. They yearned for the great offensive which would evolve into warfare of movement—they yearned for the psychological thrill of a push forward. They yearned to seize huge tracts of enemy territory and capture enormous quantities of booty. Only in an attack could the full resources of their army be exploited—only in an attack could every man pull his full weight.

According to facts which can be verified from the testimony even of the enemy, it is quite evident that at least on one occasion in March, 1918, the German army were almost on the verge of victory. And there is incontestable proof that with better leadership and larger forces, both of which were available if sought for, victory could have been definitely achieved. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the position of the German army just a month earlier, i.e. in February, was by no means so favourable that one could forecast a victory with any certainty. The tactical, moral and strategic advantages which the Germans had over the Allies were not so great at that date as to guarantee victory.

The German army comprised at the end of March 196 divisions, and between that date and May five divisions were transferred from the east, and at a later date eight further divisions. All these divisions should have been brought to the Western Front at a far earlier date. The rather sharp differentiation at an earlier period in the west between "storm" divisions and trench divisions proved to be untenable in periods of crisis. The so-called "trench divisions," although not adequately equipped for the warfare of movement, had to adapt themselves very quickly to it, and succeeded very well in doing so.

The failure to transfer Austro-Hungarian divisions to the west was a very serious mistake. This omission is explainable only on the attitude which is psychologically

understandable, but which should certainly not have weighed in such a vital issue, that the Germans wished to "finish the job" alone. It is also explainable on the grounds that they looked upon their Allies as being rather inferior to themselves. The German liaison general in the Austro-Hungarian headquarters, Cramon, whose testimony is undoubtedly reliable, states in his book that if they were needed, Austro-Hungarian divisions would have been despatched. The negotiations on this subject, however, were very half-hearted. In this, its most vital test, the unified command system failed. There was no definite desire to bring the Austro-Hungarians to the Western Front—and so the matter fizzled out.

It was politically a wise move that the attack was made against the English front, as the English were regarded as the most formidable power among the Allies and it was most important to strike at them first. It was also wise from a strategic and tactical point of view, as they were fighting with their backs to the sea, and had consequently only a comparatively small area for retreat, if forced to fall back. Furthermore, there was a series of rather weak positions along their front, especially those two positions that were subsequently actually marked out for the offensive. Again, the English were considerably weakened after the Flanders fight, and had less experience than the French in the warfare of movement.

Meanwhile huge tracts of territory were occupied in the east—in the south of Russia mainly on economic grounds, to ensure supplies of food, coal and raw material—in the north of Russia more for political reasons, i.e. to secure protectorate areas among the frontier states, and to guarantee the provision of a buffer zone against Bolshevism. The fact that Hindenburg and Ludendorff set their faces against the suggestion of an invasion of Russia for the purpose of setting up a government—a feat which, from the military point of view, was quite feasible—is quite as understandable in the light of their experiences with the Kerensky government, as the fact that they made no efforts to raise recruits among the frontier states.

There has been quite a deluge of variant views regarding the method in which the German offensive against the

English was conducted in the spring of 1918. Once more ill-luck dogged the Germans. The cup of victory was dashed from their lips, and the war suddenly took on a hopeless turn that recalled the fatal Marne battle, the neglected opportunities in the east in 1914 and 1915, as well as the failure to seize the splendid chance of victory in the beginning of 1916. The last phase of the war from a military point of view, when the possibility of a draw changed into the inevitability of defeat, began in May, 1918.

In reviewing the preparations that were made for the offensive, except for the errors with regard to reinforcements which we have already mentioned, it will be admitted without hesitation by everybody that they were thorough and brilliant. The sanguine hopes of the troops, their trust in their generals and their ardour for combat, were spontaneous and scarcely needed any stimulus. The training of the troops in offensive tactics in the warfare of movement and in gas attacks under favourable weather conditions, the bogus instructions and feint movements with a view to putting the enemy off the scent, the secret nocturnal transport on the eve of battle—the clockwork precision with which all these schemes were carried out, show clearly what a colossal task was undertaken by Ludendorff and his staff. A particularly wonderful achievement was the adoption of a new system of range-finding, which reduced to a minimum the tell-tale test volleys. It was a system of which the enemy could never find the secret, and, in conjunction with the effective methods of German gas-attacks, it was a splendid reply to the tanks. It is well known that all these devices surprised and confused the Allies, and drove them to the verge of complete collapse.

Both Hindenburg and Ludendorff felt some anxiety regarding the objectives selected for the first attack, in connection with which they had to drive through the regions which had been laid waste in the Battle of the Somme in 1916 and in the German retreat in 1917. Their goal, which was the sea, was further removed than in the north, and a serious consideration was the fact that the lie of the front was not such that a thrust at it would

strike straight seawards ; in reality it would glance at a tangent away from the direction of the sea. And yet there were very fundamental objections, too, against the selection of other points of attack. Hence, Hindenburg and Ludendorff decided upon the lesser of two evils. The British reserves were scantiest and their front lines weakest at the spots selected. When one reviews the whole story of that campaign, the fact that the German offensive made far less progress in the north where the enemy was stronger and his reserves were more easily available than in the south, fully justifies the selection made by the generals. It is pointless to quote the successes attained in the south in order to show that a similar victory in the north would have achieved definite objectives.

Take, for instance, the Arras sector, about which French critics have written such a lot. The trouble about Arras was that the enemy was very strongly entrenched there and that there were several extraordinary difficulties to be encountered from a tactical point of view. The second German offensive was made in the beginning of April against the sector to the south of Ypres—a sector that was particularly favourable for tactical reasons. Furthermore, it was only at this time of the year that it was possible to make an advance through such a swampy region. This attack cut right into the British main reserves.

While unanimous praise has been accorded by all critics to the preparations that were made for the offensive, and while the majority of writers agree that the best points had been selected for attack, there is considerable divergence of opinion as to whether there should have been only one major or several minor attacks, or whether there should have been just one major and one minor attack—or again whether there should have been one major and several minor attacks. In conjunction with the last hypothesis, the critics raise the question as to the order in which these attacks should have been made. Hindenburg and Ludendorff decided for one major and one minor offensive, with regard to which, however, the minor one, through lack of adequate resources, was not to be carried out until after the major one. The idea

of petty feint manœuvres was abandoned through shortage of material resources and troops. It stood to reason that a great German offensive, started at the psychological moment when the first one had had its full effect, was bound to be very successful, inasmuch as the enemy, as already pointed out, had spent all his resources in the defence put up against the first one. And if the second offensive was rather belated and not intensive enough, this was mainly due to the failure to concentrate all available forces on the Western Front. There was very probably a second explanation for the relative weakness of the second offensive—an explanation based on psychological grounds. Ardent hopes had been entertained that the first offensive which had been carried out on such an enormous scale, and on which all the available resources of mechanised warfare had been expended, would prove successful—a hope which led critics to say that Hindenburg and Ludendorff had staked everything on that offensive—that they reckoned that it was to spell final victory or utter defeat for them. A second psychological reason was the fact that great doubts were entertained as to the ability of the enemy to bring up reserves quickly enough to the point where the English and French forces joined. And the doubters were correct in their surmise too. This under-estimation regarding the bringing up of reserves is especially censured by the French critics, who invariably point to the contrast between the German attitude and that of Foch in the second half of 1918, when he kept up a persistent offensive on a steadily increasing front, and forced the enemy to put all their available reserves into the field. The most important preliminary condition for the adoption of similar tactics, i.e. an overwhelming superiority in men and material, was lacking in the case of the Germans. And even in Foch's case, although he had far larger forces and infinitely better supplies of war material than the Germans, his army had reached a state of exhaustion that would have entailed very disastrous reactions had not the armistice come on very opportunely. Indeed, taking everything into consideration, it is difficult to see how Hindenburg and Ludendorff could have done better than they did with the resources available.

The manner in which the offensive was carried out has been justly and unanimously censured by the critics, on the grounds that the attackers were weaker just opposite the better entrenched northern sector of the enemy, in the rear of which was the coveted objective, the sea, than they were opposite the southern sector; and, further, that later, when the stronger but less important southern German wing had made good progress, fresh and utterly divergent tasks with strong reinforcements to back them were undertaken by it, while an attack along a broad front by the north wing proved abortive. And finally Hindenburg and Ludendorff have been blamed for the fact that the yawning gap in the enemy's lines at Amiens was not seen in time and an attack made on it.

There is a certain amount of logic in the assertion that had the first offensive been carried out according to plan without a hitch, the Germans could very easily have overcome the few trivial obstacles standing in the path of complete victory. In short, it was due alike to certain miscalculations and errors of the generals as well as to the fact that adequate reinforcements had not been brought up that the Germans failed to secure a complete victory in the field before the entry of the Americans. But after weighing up all the views of the critics of the manner in which the offensive was conducted, it must be remembered that it was infinitely more successful than any of the attacks carried out at any period either previously or afterwards during the entire war; it was even more successful than the one which was carried out by the enemy in the second half of 1918 under far more favourable circumstances and with enormous superiority in men and material. This gigantic German offensive was unquestionably the first really great enterprise carried out on the Western Front against all sections of the enemy. It will go down to history as a military achievement worthy of the two great generals who planned it.

The second part of the German offensive against the English front failed for two reasons. The first reason was the lack of adequate forces, owing to the fact that at the point of the first break through very strong forces

remained entrenched, and further owing to the impossibility of engaging all the enemy reserves at the first point of the break through, owing to the fact that the German units entrenched there were too exhausted, and finally owing to the speed and clockwork precision with which Foch brought up further French reserves to the English. In short, it was once more a question of adequate manpower, which in turn was due to the fact that all available German and Austro-Hungarian reserves had not been rushed up. The Channel Ports remained in English hands, and the submarines were henceforth forced to take the circuitous route around the British Islands, which meant a considerable amount of voyaging without achieving anything, and reduced the striking effectiveness of this weapon by nearly half. A route through the English Channel which was patrolled on both sides by the Allies had been for a long time practically impossible for them owing to the magnificent defence system. But apart from the effective blow to the efficiency of the submarines that was thereby delivered, the possession of the Channel Ports was for other reasons too of practically vital importance to the Allies. It is difficult to see how the English could have kept their army going if their lines had been considerably lengthened as the result of transferring their bases to more southerly French ports. Even from the mere question of tonnage it is difficult to see how they could have coped with such a contingency.

Pari passu with the increased efficiency of the submarine there evolved a greater shortage of ships among the Allies—a dilemma from which they only succeeded in extricating themselves with the greatest difficulty. And even though the British Admiralty entertained hopes of being able to maintain a convoy service to the southern ports, there is no doubt that the intensive transport of American troops which started in April and put a desperate strain on British shipping, and menaced the food supplies of the people, could not have been maintained had the Channel Ports been lost. At this period the amount of American tonnage available was negligible.

After the two German offensives in March and April,



Imperial War Museum
THE KAISER WITH HINDI LIBUR AND IUDI NDORI STUDYING MUS

1918, had proved abortive, Hindenburg and Ludendorff were faced with the anxious problem as to how they were to follow up their campaign. Offensives prepared with extreme care and on which all the resources available on the Western Front had been lavishly expended proved abortive and had been held up at the moment of victory by reserves hurried up by the enemy. An offensive on a large scale was no longer thinkable. The newly won and deeply driven salient had to be manned so strongly owing to its perilous position that any future attacks could only be second-rate affairs in comparison with the March one. They must inevitably lack the driving-force needed to overthrow the enemy's reserves. Hindenburg and Ludendorff now concentrated their hopes on wearing out by a series of minor attacks the enemy who was as exhausted as they were, and thereby causing the front to collapse. This hope was not founded on such a logical basis as that of the great double-offensive. The time spent in the preparations for and carrying out of such offensives operated in every sense in favour of the Allies. This was not merely on account of the steady stream of American troops pouring into France; it was mainly due to the fact that the next thrust was to be not against the English, who were now pretty well exhausted, but against the French. And so the English got the time that was necessary to reorganise, and the damage done by the previous offensive, which had nearly struck a mortal blow at their army, was being rapidly made good. The attack was made on the French, because the reserves of the Allies were concentrated behind the English front, and in the opinion of Hindenburg and Ludendorff they had no longer the strength to cope with them. The German scheme now was to sunder the connection between the French and the English, after which a deadly thrust was to be made against the English.

The effect, however, of this series of attacks was that the French were considerably exhausted, and were forced to bring up troops from the English front, while in the interval the English had regained strength to such an extent that they had practically to start at them afresh once more. But it was expecting too much to hope that the German army, after an offensive against the French,

would still have the strength and the time to attack the English even if the latter got no support.

With the scheme for the resumption of the offensive in the beginning of May, 1918, begins the period when from a military point of view the idea of the possibility of a "draw" as a result of the exhaustion of the enemy began to merge into the certainty of defeat, owing to the previous exhaustion of their own army. In fact that would have been the ideal time for the assumption of a stubborn defensive, in order to show the enemy that, if he hoped for a victory at all, he could attain it only by the most lavish sacrifice of life—a sacrifice which the English were morally, and the French physically, unfit to make, while America by herself was not strong enough to make it.

The prospects of the enemy for a complete victory in the case of a German defensive were, at least from the point of view of the domestic situation in Germany, better than those of Hindenburg and Ludendorff had been in 1918.

The attack on the French front at the end of May led to surprising successes. Once more the admirable preparations made by the leaders had been carried out in the most brilliant style. The German shock troops swept onward like a raging flood, and reached the Marne for the second time. It was only when they arrived at the river that they halted both for strategic reasons and because they were dog-tired. Once more the Marne was destined to be associated with a turning-point in Germany's fate. The unexpectedly great initial success had swept the Germans forward with such reckless *élan*, however, that they finally entrenched themselves in a rather untenable position. Only one railway line led to the front sector, on which a dozen German divisions faced three different directions. The fatal turn of affairs began for Hindenburg and Ludendorff with their failure to rein in the onrushing troops at the psychological moment in order to save them from their perilous plight. The crisis commenced when in order to get out of their impasse, instead of ordering a rearguard movement, which at any rate would have engaged a portion of the enemy's reserves, they opened first a minor attack to relieve the situation,

and when it proved abortive, they made another drive on a somewhat larger scale with a view to broadening out the front sector to a width that would make it easier to hold. The result was a twofold drive from which a third objective evolved, i.e. the improvement of the position of a sector which already was engaged on a subsidiary project—the drawing-off of the reserves from the English front. It was playing a bold game with the time as well as with the strength of the German army. By degrees a host of further subsidiary objectives and aspirations was associated with the second and more ambitious drive. Their main goal all the time was of course the English front, on which were centred their most important and most immediate aims.

A twofold misadventure befell the German commanders during the second offensive, known as the second Battle of the Marne, which started on July 15th with a view to broadening the Marne salient.

The initial error developed into a serious tactical blunder. The German attack failed along a great stretch of the front owing to the espionage and the consequent splendid defensive operations by the enemy. And then when Hindenburg and Ludendorff suddenly decided to swing round their forces, in order to strike at the English once more, a counter-attack of the Allies on the Marne salient developed on July 18th, and drove a great gap into the front, which only by an extraordinary effort was patched up in such a manner that a relatively safe evacuation of the Marne salient was possible. The evacuation itself was a splendid tactical achievement for all concerned, but marked historically the high-water mark of Germany's power in the Great War. Strategic initiative passed over to the Allies with this counter-attack, and the German army was forced to assume the defensive. A magnificent edifice had collapsed, and moral supremacy was destined soon to pass over to the Allies likewise. The German army was henceforth on the down-grade, betrayed and abandoned by the Fatherland on which it depended for its existence.

Already in the course of the recent German offensive and in the counter-offensive of the Allies, definite indications were apparent of a weakening of the *morale* of

individual units. Yet at the moment it seemed to be of no serious consequence. And then on August 8th the English and French advanced against the German salient at Amiens which had been driven during the March offensive. The Allies, too, naturally picked out the salient which was the weak point of their enemy. The Germans were in a panic. Whole divisions lost their *morale*. The dread of the tanks was merely a superficial symptom of a very serious malady. Defeatism was rife, and the tanks merely precipitated its open manifestation. The depression among the troops was the outcome of the excessive physical and mental strain of their recent fighting, while the news of the failure of the second Marne battle which they all regarded as an indication of the turn of the tide, and finally the reaction of the feeling in the Fatherland, were also contributory causes. It must always be remembered that the civilian population of Germany was plunged in the depths of despair long before the men at the front began to lose heart.

In the beginning of August Hindenburg and Ludendorff were partially successful in their defensive measures, but their last hope of victory had vanished, as they could not fail to notice the symptoms of the army's ebbing strength, which were quite obvious even to the enemy. It was about this time that Ludendorff tendered his resignation, which was not accepted.

It was high time now to withdraw the army from a front which was exposed to dangerous attacks over an extensive area, into firmly entrenched positions in the rear, even at the risk of losing war materials—a loss which, though serious, could have been made good. Reinforcements and reserves should have been brought up, and the enemy should have been allowed to advance. But these entrenched positions were not available, with the exception of one near the front. They were not available, because it had not occurred to anybody that one day they would be very urgently needed. It would have taken about 100,000 men, it was calculated, to build these entrenchments. Hindenburg and Ludendorff should most decidedly have insisted on those men being forthcoming. They did not do so. The men who should have been building the entrenchments were

"indispensables" in the Fatherland. One grievous error that was committed during the transition period from the hope of victory to the hope of a "draw," was the fact that every available man was not brought up to the front. Another serious error committed during this period, a tactical error at that, was the series of mistakes in connection with the March attack. And the period that embraced the transition from the hope of a "draw" to the certainty of defeat, was marked by two serious blunders, i.e. the failure to erect entrenchments in the rear, and the tactical error of having an inordinately long battle front on the Marne salient. The order for the erection of rear positions, which should have been given early in 1918, was not given till the beginning of September. And in the interval the army fell back step by step in splendidly organised, but wasteful and futile rearguard actions from one makeshift line of defence to another, until towards the middle of September it had reached the position from which it had started in the spring. This system of fighting entailed the daily risk of a break through by the enemy—a risk that became more intense as the days rolled on. The fact that the enemy was not aware of the chances of breaking through, and also the fact that, even had he known of them, he would not have availed himself of them, gave Hindenburg and Ludendorff ground for the one hope now remaining to them—that they could withdraw with their front intact.

Only very briefly, and as far as it is necessary to show the share of the responsibility of the two generals for the downfall of the German army, need the causes of that downfall be enumerated here. The hopeless condition of the Fatherland, the ineptitude of the Government and of the Reichstag in everything they touched, but especially in vital national issues, such as the war aims, the electoral question, national service, war profiteering, soldiers' pay and the right to strike, have been already mentioned. On all these issues the attitude in Germany was diametrically opposite to that of the western nations in dealing with similar problems. And then, in addition to all the other troubles that Germany had to face, there was the menace of famine which was becoming more terrible from day to day. None of the enemy nations had to face

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such a dreadful ordeal as this. To make matters worse, the utter moral isolation of the Central Powers owing to the dissemination throughout the whole world of "atrocities" and "war guilt" propaganda, which found expression in numerous war manifestos, preyed terribly on the minds of the two nations who were being so

and many a commander preferred to do without reinforcements from the Fatherland to bringing disseminators of defeatism among his troops. But it was not only by the preaching of the gospel of despair by those who arrived from the Fatherland that the efficiency of the front-line soldiers was impaired, but also through the number of malingeringers and the hundreds of thousands of "office-stool field greys" and barrack-square braves whom a stern War Department Executive should have kicked out to the trenches. This "home army" was a colossal organisation, which waxed fat at the expense of the men at the front. All the efforts of Hindenburg and Ludendorff to shift them were of no avail. But by the irony of fate when it was far too late, i.e. at the end of October, 1918, suddenly 600,000 of these warrior clerks were released from their office stools and sent to the front.

Practically left to its own resources from the middle of 1918, the German army at the front commenced to melt away like snow in the sunshine. All told, towards the end it scarcely totalled one-third of its strength in the previous March. And yet it is extremely probable that, in spite of its desperate plight, the army might have made a "peace by agreement" with the enemy, had not the Fatherland, its mainstay, virtually abandoned it to its fate.

Taking into account the internal depression of the nation and the military position, Hindenburg and Ludendorff announced to the Government in August, 1918, that there was no longer any hope of victory and that all they could do was to aim at a "draw" with the Allies. But once more they were let down by the Government, which was not now in a position to make a definite pronouncement about its war aims. Moreover, the Government was too paralysed to tell the people how serious their plight was, and with an ardent appeal to their patriotism, to inspire them to make a supreme and final desperate effort to avert defeat, and to fight to the death against an enemy who had made it only too plain that he would show no mercy if he were the victor. It must be admitted, too, that Hindenburg and Ludendorff did not take the bold dramatic stand at this crisis that might have gingered up the Government to

make a last desperate appeal to the nation. And so the Government, in utter ignorance of the seriousness of the situation, decided to wait for a moment which would be more auspicious from a military point of view, so that they might enter into negotiations with the enemy with a neutral power as mediator. But this more auspicious military situation never materialised, and so the weeks rolled on without anything being done. Neither was any feeler for peace thrown out, nor was an appeal made to the people, nor was the army reinforced—nor was any plan of campaign drawn up ! It was a period of panicky chaos when creeping paralysis seemed to unnerve both nation and army. One has only to conjure up in one's mind a picture of the effect that would have been produced if only in the beginning of August the construction of the Meuse—Antwerp entrenchment of the Rhine front, and perhaps also of frontier fortifications, had been started and officially announced, and if a new Imperial Chancellor, full of energy and courage, had led his people and appealed to them to fight to the very last ditch, and if he announced that the nation sought no acquisition of territory, and if he formed a Defence Cabinet comprising all parties, and if, furthermore, he had started a ruthless campaign against malingeringers, poltroons, "indispensables" and profiteers, and had shown the Allies that they had to deal with a Germany resolved to perish rather than give in. Such an attitude would have instilled new strength into the nation and the army, and the enemy would decide that a complete victory would be too dearly purchased at the price of another winter's campaign.

The weeks passed by in further battles which became fiercer from day to day. The German army's life-blood was being drained away by the ceaseless fighting, but it had stuck it out. And then in the middle of September both the Turks and the Bulgarians had serious reverses, which made it clear that the collapse of both nations was imminent. The Allies commenced their general offensive on September 26th against the entrenched positions of the German army, and attained a series of successes. The Americans, fresh and enthusiastic opponents, fought side by side with the Allies, after having gained a victory

which, though trivial from a military point of view, was morally significant, at the salient south of Verdun which had not been evacuated when the moment was opportune. While the nation's nerves were shattered by the hopeless plight of things, a new conference of all the leading men was held on September 29th. The indirect peace-feelers with their vague objectives had been utterly abortive. More radical remedies than vague hopes of mediation were needed to heal the internal trouble in Germany. Ludendorff declined the tentative office of a dictatorship in full consciousness of his hopelessness as a politician. Then a drastic step in the opposite direction was tried. A Parliamentary Government with an Imperial Chancellor responsible to, and acceptable to the Reichstag, instead of the Kaiser, was appointed, and the electoral reforms were rushed through. A desperate effort to make up at the last minute for the dilatoriness and the procrastination of the previous regime was precipitated. Hindenburg and Ludendorff pressed for the immediate publication of the contemplated peace offer following an armistice. Apropos of the crisis General Buat's striking epigram sums up the situation: "Germany's fall was too sheer; she broke her ribs." This applied both to the nation, whose Government had hitherto been quite unaware of the imminence of doom, and to Hindenburg and Ludendorff—and especially to the latter. Both men decidedly had fallen too precipitately from too great a height. They had lost their nerve; their political and military vision had become alike blurred. The army and the nation, the Kaiser and their generals—all that they had based their hopes and trust on, had failed them. Their tremendous achievements had all been in vain. It was their turn to collapse now.

In vain did the new Imperial Chancellor, Prince Max of Baden, urge the two commanders to give up the idea of overtures for peace and an armistice. The suggestion of the application for an armistice Prince Max particularly deprecated, as he dreaded its disastrous reaction upon the nation and the army, while it would act as a tonic on the enemy. In vain did he try to get the views of other generals on the matter. He was literally forced

both by Hindenburg and Ludendorff, as well as by the Kaiser, to adopt the fatal step.

The effect of his step on the German people was devastating. Nobody had prepared them for the dreadful finale. They had now lost their confidence in Hindenburg and Ludendorff too. The last props of the nation had been cut down. Turning their backs and their minds away from their army's still unbroken front line, they alternately indulged in an orgy of political passion and intrigue, and fixed their hopes with pathetic trust on President Wilson who seemed to be actuated by the purest altruistic humanitarianism. Negotiations were opened at first rather tentatively and cautiously by the American President, as he suspected that there might be some trickery behind a move which came rather as a surprise to the Allies. After that the negotiations between President Wilson and Germany dragged on into a tedious questionnaire on his part which was absolutely nerve-shattering for an unhappy people who only learned, so to speak, piecemeal the terms that the Allies were determined to enforce on them. Peace on the basis of the American President's vaunted fourteen points was requested in the terms of the first German note on October 4th. Only by degrees did President Wilson, to the accompaniment of pious snortings and deprecatory whinings about any intention on his part to connive at ruthless terms for the vanquished, make it plain that in his opinion peace was impossible with a military autocracy. Germany must surrender and disarm, he stated bluntly. The second note from Wilson insisted so frankly upon the determination of the Allies to interfere in Germany's internal political arrangements, that Hindenburg and Ludendorff repudiated the negotiations, and made a fervent appeal for a new stand by the army on the German frontier. Ludendorff suddenly became very alert to the possibilities attendant on a steadfast military attitude. He pointed out to the German Government that, after all, the dreaded break through by the enemy, which had been an eternal bugbear to them recently, had not materialised. He furthermore argued that the enemy was just pegging away at his old-time systematic nibbling, which his overwhelming superiority

in numbers and the enforced retirement of the Germans through lack of defensive positions in the rear, enabled him to carry out with comparative success. With the approach of winter and his arrival at the Antwerp-Meuse position, Ludendorff, smarting under the unfortunate results of his armistice project, began to weigh seriously the chances of a desperate stand against an enemy intent on the humiliation and ruin of his country. This sudden change in his attitude, coupled with an appeal made by him and Hindenburg to the army to stick it out—an appeal which found a responsive echo, led Prince Max to insist on the immediate resignation of Ludendorff. Incidentally, President Wilson's third note, delivered on October 23rd, had emphatically insisted on the disappearance of Ludendorff and the Kaiser. On October 26th Ludendorff, an utterly broken man, relinquished his post. Hindenburg, who even then was virtually the only one of the two who was known to the masses of the German people, stuck loyally to his post, determined to do his utmost to save the army, which was now at loggerheads with the Reichstag, from utter disintegration, and to attempt a last orderly retreat with unbroken front to the Meuse. For though very badly shaken, the German front line was still quite intact. And the only fixed resolve now implanted in Hindenburg's heart was that the enemy must on no account be permitted to break through. The army felt renewed confidence in their great leader, who, though he could no longer hope to lead them to victory, yet could lead them safely home. Ludendorff's retirement had very little effect on the army or the people. He was never a popular figure, nor did he strive to be one. He pined not for glory or distinction; he fought disinterestedly, and without any ulterior motive, for his country—his only passion in life. His one fault was that he had far too much confidence in himself and in others, and he never recovered from the bitter shock of the inevitable disillusionment that was bound to come.

After taking Valenciennes and Le Quesnoy the British menaced the vital Maubeuge junction. The Meuse was turned by American and French divisions, who also imperilled that vital artery—the railway at Mezieres. During the last week the German army, cut off from all

hope of a lateral escape, retreated precipitately with its centre converging upon the Ardennes. And then the end came just two days before the opening of a new Franco-American offensive.

President Wilson's fourth note announced that the Allies were prepared for a modified acceptance of his fourteen points. On November 11th fighting ceased on a front running eastward of Mons, Maubeuge, Mezieres, Frenes, Sedan and Munster.

The question whether Germany could still carry on the fight, whether she could not have made an effort to improve the harsh armistice terms, instead of submitting supinely to an enemy intent on her destruction, can be definitely answered in the affirmative. This view is substantiated in an article by Foch that appeared in July, 1928, in the *Neue Freie Presse* of Vienna. The Meuse-Antwerp position, the frontier, and, finally, the Rhine were such formidable barriers, that a stubborn resistance could quite easily have been put up against the enemy. At the present day when we know how unfavourable the position of the enemy, both in regard to man power and to *morale*, was at the time of the German surrender, and that the Governments and generals of the Allies would have shrunk back appalled at the definite prospect of having to fight on into 1919, we can assert without fear of contradiction that could Germany have foreseen that the hunger blockade would have been continued after the armistice, there would not have been an armistice.

Still the fact remains that in the space of a few months the Central Powers passed swiftly from confidence in victory to the hope of a "draw" and from the hope of a "draw" to defeat. It was a downfall that in its consequences will go down to history as one of the world's greatest tragedies. And yet the colossal struggle of the German army under Hindenburg and Ludendorff against practically the whole world in 1918 will form the theme of heroic sagas for posterity. In their offensives the two generals won victories of a far more sweeping nature than any successes gained by the Allies. When put on the defensive, despite inferiority in numbers—even in the face of sheer hunger, they formed a wall of adamant against which their enemy smashed themselves again

and again. And in the end no strategic victory was gained by the Allies. They merely pressed the German army mechanically backwards step by step owing to sheer weight of numbers and superabundance of war material.

Pershing stated with some pique in his memoirs that it was to him an intolerable recollection that the German army, though conquered, left the battlefield with its flag untarnished, and the soldiers marched off with heads erect instead of being rounded up and disarmed. Hindenburg and his army fully deserved this last moral triumph. It was a final kindly dispensation of fate that the enemy was deprived of the triumphal gesture, which he would never have ventured to fight for through another winter.

JOFFRE—THE MOROSE

IN the year 1911 when France gave way to Germany with very bad grace in connection with the Morocco crisis, because neither England nor Russia could persuade their people that a French colonial dispute was an adequate reason for war, and when the tension which the Dreyfus incident had caused among French officers was becoming relaxed, the appointment of a new commander-in-chief of the French army was under consideration. General Pau, an 1870 veteran, appeared the most eligible candidate, but the authorities fought shy of him, firstly on account of his staunch Catholicism, and secondly because he had insisted that if he were appointed, he should have a free hand in selecting the higher officers for the army. Joffre, as an uncompromising Republican, was more to their liking, and, though he laid down no conditions, he was virtually allowed the free hand which had been refused to Pau.

The politicians knew what they had to expect, or rather what they had not to expect from Joffre. He was not a man of brilliant intellect, he was devoid of initiative—he was not a dictator in embryo. He was slightly over medium height, and with his sturdy, thick-set body propped on rather thin legs, his bushy eyebrows and his long moustache, he had the cut of a phlegmatic bourgeois general. Press cartoons emphasised the morose expression of the sexagenarian general, and dubbed him “Papa Joffre” or “Grandpa Joffre,” nicknames which stuck to him right through the war. Among his intimate friends he was known as “the buoy” on account of the phlegmatic poise which he preserved under all conditions. A fastidious gourmand and a heavy sleeper, he conveyed on a very casual acquaintance the impression of unruffled, easy-going geniality, but in reality there was no trace of kindness or warmth behind that placid, immobile mask.

His career among the sappers in the colonial service had made him a calculating, methodical robot. Personal appeals, exciting incidents and political crises aroused no responsive thrill in his rigid, unemotional soul. Yet he was shrewd enough to maintain the externals of geniality and friendship, and every officer in France was aware of his well-defined political attitude. But he was never a fervid or enthusiastic partisan; he was rather chilly and aloof in his party loyalties. He hardly ever made use of the word "France" or "Fatherland"; he always spoke of "The Republic."

When the war broke out Joffre had planned out alternative routes for his army. Which of the two he would take depended upon the contingency of the enemy's decision to march through Belgium. On the second day after the commencement of mobilisation his route was decided by the invasion of Belgium. The French reconnaissance system had completely broken down. Until the very start of the fighting along the frontiers, Joffre, despite many warnings, adhered to the view which he had held during peace-time that the Germans could not to any appreciable extent move far westward past the Meuse. He had figured the thing out, and could not be persuaded to change his point of view. His plan, to which he stuck doggedly despite all eventualities, was, on the one hand, to invade Lorraine and to send auxiliary forces into Alsace, and on the other, to cut off the Germans who were invading Belgium by an offensive to the east of the Meuse. The position of the French army was somewhat similar to that of the Austrian army at the beginning of the war. Both were surrounded by enemies to the east and north. Joffre's plan of attack, in accordance with which his forces deployed eastward and northward, aimed at objectives in opposite directions. By attacking on all sides he had broken up his forces. The idea of entering Alsace and Lorraine as a liberator was good politically, but bad strategically. But Joffre, once he had started, plodded ahead clumsily like a bear in the direction which he had mapped out for himself.

The armies came into conflict. Joffre's preconceived and stubbornly maintained theory had worked out wrong

in practice. Unexpectedly weak German forces, but strongly entrenched and with fortresses to their rear, had taken up their positions in the Imperial Provinces, while overwhelming hosts poured through Belgium and spread far westward beyond the Meuse. However, the order for attack had been given. Since 1870 an offensive had been proclaimed in all the great military headquarters as the only permissible type of fighting from a tactical and strategic point of view. Joffre himself had always maintained that the infantryman with his gleaming bayonet was the decisive factor in battle. This obsession was foolish enough, but his most egregious miscalculation was his view that light field artillery was quite adequate. He neglected to provide efficient heavy artillery, as he regarded it as cumbersome lumber. He also set very little store by barrage as a preparation for an infantry attack.

Brave, but inept, his troops marched into the shambles. Both strategically and tactically the issue was quickly decided in favour of the better led, better trained and better armed Germans. Joffre himself after a few months of warfare had to make a complete change in his instructions both to infantry and artillery. He had failed both tactically and strategically.

The French plan of campaign collapsed like a house of cards. The blow was so terrible that Joffre lost his poise, and did not recover it so easily. It is true he gave up his politico-military visions, and seeing that Paris was in danger, he called back every man that could be spared from Alsace-Lorraine. But some external impulse was needed to restore Joffre's equanimity. His phlegmatic calm when once lost, was not regained so easily. The lines of the Aisne and the Marne were abandoned. And still the retreat went on. For a little it looked as if a stand might be made at the Seine. Again the possibility of halting at the Loire was considered. Instructions were given to Sarrail that he could, if he chose to do so, evacuate Verdun.

And then just at the psychological moment appeared the man who helped to restore Joffre's old-time aplomb and self-control. It was Gallieni. One might almost describe Gallieni as the exact antithesis to Hentsch,

Imperial War Museum
MARSHALS IRVING JOHNSON, ROCH FREDERICK MARSHAL, SIR DONALD ASHARE AND GENE RAUH IRISHING
WITH DICK WILKINS



Moltke's atrabilious envoy, who was the first to bring ruin on the German cause. Gallieni hurried to Joffre. He had learned that the Germans were marching past the fortifications of Paris at a tangent. He marshalled the "Army of Paris" and induced the British to make a stand. He had a scheme for taking the Germans in the flank and rear. The brain-wave of Gallieni reacted on Joffre, and he became once more the placid stolid leader. He decided to deploy his forces outside Verdun and Paris, and to catch the onward rushing Germans in a pincers-grip. He despatched division after division to Paris, instructed Gallieni to rush his garrison out of the city as quickly as possible in taxis and buses, and adopted every conceivable device to trap the Germans. He recognised the greatness of Gallieni's conception, and, accepting it without a word of thanks, acted on it with determination.

In the Marne battle Joffre entrusted General Foch with the command of the army, and when in the following weeks the struggle to get control of the sea-board began, he made the man who had been boycotted on account of his practical Catholicism an assistant commander-in-chief, in order to facilitate the contact with the English and the Belgians. His selection spoke well for Joffre's knowledge of mankind. He felt he could now act freely without paying any attention to politicians, as no minister would dare to interfere with him in the position which he had secured by his victory.

Pétain and Nivelle, who were then colonels, owed their remarkable rapid promotion to Joffre. But he was ruthless in dealing with leaders who fell foul of him or whom he thought incompetent. More than half of the corps and army commanders were sent home during the first few weeks of the war. His treatment of Gallieni and Pau, who were his seniors in the service and had been his chief rivals, was not fair and verged on treachery. In spite of Gallieni's services in the Battle of the Marne (Gallieni, incidentally, had at one time been Joffre's superior officer) he got no command at the front. Pau, who really should have been appointed as commander-in-chief, was sent on all sorts of odd missions to foreign countries. The bourgeois general was not quite so

innocuous as he seemed, and was surrounded by officers who feared him and fawned upon him. He looked good-natured, but was devoid of feeling. But the disinterested manner in which he distributed favours and administered penalties without any regard to an officer's political loyalties, showed how impervious he was to the wiles of place-hunters. The real reason of this was that he only cared for one party—himself!

Supported by the cautious and resourceful work of Foch during the first Battle of Ypres, and full of confidence owing to the Marne victory, Joffre managed in 1915, with the aid of the English liaison General, Wilson (afterwards Sir Henry Wilson), to have a tacit understanding for co-ordinating his plans with those of the British army. At the end of 1915 the position was changed owing to a series of circumstances. Wilson was recalled, and his office was abolished. The British army had become so strong that it was no longer a mere appendage to the French army. Moreover, Joffre had acted in a very strange way towards the English with regard to the Salonika question. Like all French leaders, he thought that the fight on the Western Front, and especially the defence of Paris, were the chief tasks, nay, almost the sole objectives of the war. But after the defeat of Russia there was a regular panic in official circles owing to the consequent collapse of the isolated Serbians. The French Government was in a very perilous plight. Right Wing and Left Wing Radicals were in rebellious mood. Joffre was in imminent risk of losing his command. From day to day he kept changing his plans. He sent six divisions to the Balkans, and persuaded the English also to send six more. He survived the political crisis, and seemed to all appearances quite unaffected by it. After the retirement of French, Grand-duc Nicholas and Moltke, he and Conrad were the only generals who had held supreme command since the beginning of the war.

A sense of the importance of other battle fronts, as well as the Western Front, began henceforth to weigh very much with Joffre. As a matter of course he was appointed president of the Joint Conference of the Allies which started about this time. His assumed affability,

his bovine placidity and his brevity of speech impressed the English and Russians especially. Moreover, he was surrounded with the twofold glamour of experience and of the Marne victory, whose importance loomed daily more and more before the mind of the public.

Joffre was apparently firmly entrenched in his office. The Government had saved him, and he had saved the Government. But there were definite limitations now placed to his power. His right to select his superior officers was again contingent on the approval of the Ministry *de facto*, not merely *de jure* as hitherto. And so Sarrail, whom Joffre had dismissed for disobedience, received, owing to the insistence of a powerful political clique, the command in the Balkans. In addition to this they appointed Castelnau as an assistant to Joffre, with the intention that he should gradually assume the actual command of the Western Front, while it was planned that Joffre should just have a nominal supervising authority over the Western Front and the Balkan Front. But the sheer momentum of the personality of the phlegmatic Joffre proved too powerful for the crafty political intriguers. Castelnau came to loggerheads with the commander-in-chief, and after a period of probation under him, was very soon sent on tours of inspection and various odd missions, and eventually quietly shelved. The Ministry and the politicians were anxious to make a scapegoat of Joffre, but they could not find a man to take his place. And if Joffre performed no extraordinary military achievement in 1915, neither did any other general for the matter of that. And Joffre's high standing among the Allies and his experience were assets that could not be ignored. Consequently he was continued in command, *faute de mieux*.

Already in 1915 the warfare of attrition, the gnawing at the enemy—a system which appealed very much to Joffre's temperament—had become a regular feature of the battles on the Western Front. All efforts at a "break through" had failed, and evolved automatically into "wearing out" tactics. Theoretically the French military headquarters had advocated during peace-time Napoleon's system of "breaking through" the enemy's lines, and taking him in the rear. The gnawing process,

which they adopted through force of circumstances, was of German origin, and had been Schlieffen's favourite method.

The attitude of the French nation did not permit the army to defer attacking the enemy until 1916, by which time the English army would have attained its full strength. The year 1915, it is true, was not one of brilliant campaigns for the French. Still, they had been gaining experience, and Joffre looked forward to starting an offensive on a large scale in the summer of 1916 with the co-operation of the British army.

Joffre's attrition system of fighting, of course, was just a makeshift device which was adopted because the Allies found that they were unable before the summer of 1918 to carry out their original objective of breaking through the German lines with a view to the warfare of movement. It was only when the physical strength and the *morale* of the German army were on the wane in the last few months of the war that the Allies saw the opportunity of resuming active manœuvres.

The French public protested again and again against the countless blunders and miscalculations that frustrated the hopes of victory. There was, above all, a lack of secrecy, due as much to the military preparations for an offensive as to the fact that plans of attack had to get the approval of the Ministry, and consequently passed through the hands of several individuals. Finally, as if it were deliberately intended to give as much advance publicity as possible to the contemplated objective, there were processions to the front of visiting and supervising members of the Chamber of Deputies and politicians, who, whenever it was possible, were invited to witness the opening of an attack, just as though it were a first night performance at a theatre. It is obvious that under such circumstances secrecy was absolutely impossible.

Another mistake with which Joffre was charged, was the fact that his offensives were confined to small determinate sections of the front, without an effort being made at a subsidiary offensive further along the line, or even without a feint with a view to diverting the enemy's attention and splitting up his reserves. A still more serious error on his part was the subject of protest among

the generals under his control. The co-operation between artillery and infantry in his attacks was very defective, and the question of the place and time for the bringing up of reserves could not be satisfactorily solved. Either the instructions given were too precise, and had later to be scrapped, or cross-currents of side-issues were raised during the course of a battle, and the time-table got mixed up. Also the programme for the infantry going over the top was frequently carried out with too much mechanical precision. And owing to blunders, miscalculations and lack of co-ordinated effort practically all the arrangements for breaking through the German lines came to nought. There was nothing for it then but the tedious nibbling at the enemy, in the hope of sapping his strength.

In the midst of the preparations for the great Battle of the Somme in 1916, one might almost say in the midst of the army's winter's sleep, the news came of the surprise attack on Verdun by the Germans. Joffre at his headquarters retained his wonted phlegmatic composure. "Stand fast" was his sole laconic order. Such was the terse command that saved Verdun. Such was Joffre's composure (or was it cunning?) at this critical moment that he did not hurry off himself at once to the menaced objective, but sent his assistant Castelnau, and gave him a free hand. After many anxious days, during which the fate of Verdun hung in the balance, the Germans were beaten off. A fierce attack on Joffre by Gallieni, the Minister for War, at a meeting of the Cabinet was rather belated, and brought about the fall of Gallieni himself. Joffre seemed to be invulnerable—to have a charmed life. With phlegmatic poise he continued his preparations for the Somme battle. The English also went on quietly with their own preparations, and just took over a section of the front from the French. Only with great reluctance did Joffre give the defenders of Verdun the reinforcements they were clamouring for. The number of the French divisions destined for the Somme eventually dropped from forty to fourteen.

The greatest and most bloody of the battles of attrition began. Joffre, like a bear, decided to strangle his enemy and crush him to death, as he could not knock him down.

In two great bursts in July and September, the prolonged battle reached the culmination of its fury. The Germans suffered terribly, but they were not crushed. The fierce fighting just for the capture of ruined villages and battered trenches had drained the life-blood of France to exhaustion. Joffre was doggedly determined to fight it out to a finish, but his troops were collapsing under the strain.

It is known to-day that the total losses of the Allies in all the so-called attrition battles up to the end of the Somme engagement, were considerably higher than those of the Germans. At that period there was no prospect of America entering the conflict, and consequently the fate of the war was more than dubious. Joffre's exploitation of his emergency device was not a heroic performance by a long way.

The lengthy casualty lists and the collapse of Roumania, while a French commission was sitting there, shattered Joffre's credit with the politicians towards the end of 1916. He was the first victim to his own evangel of attrition warfare. When Nivelle by a bold and cleverly planned coup got possession once more of Douaumont, near Verdun, it looked as if the long sought for leader was found in this saviour of that sector. But the old bear Joffre would not give in so easily. Despite the hints and snubs he refused to resign, and his enemies would not dare to dismiss him. The Government got out of the impasse by giving him the title of "commander-in-chief of all the armies," and technical adviser of the Government, while Nivelle took over command of the Western Front.

In the last few days of his power Joffre did a very peculiar thing, and one very typical of him. He dismissed Foch, the local general of the Somme front. No doubt he entertained the hope that thereby he would save his own face.

After he had been relieved of his office, he was raised to the rank of Marshal. Later on he went to America to do propaganda work. He never wrote his reminiscences. He walked with Pétain behind Foch in the Victory Procession through Paris. . . .

PÉTAIN—THE VERSATILE

THE sixty-two-year-old pensioner Colonel-Brigadier Pétain, who resumed active service in 1914, could hardly have foreseen when he did so, that he would have the most spectacular career of all the great generals of the war. Were it not for the war, were it not for the whole-hearted support he got from Joffre and Foch, the unsociable officer with the gruff manners and the imposing appearance, who had no friends, would scarcely have become a general, to say nothing of rising to the rank of commander-in-chief of the French army and Marshal of France. The only one who could compare with him for rapidity of promotion, if we except some generals of the Russian Revolution, was Nivelle, who was just a colonel when the war broke out. Joffre recognised Pétain's talent, and in his matter-of-fact practical manner, encouraged it, and used it in the interests of the war.

There was no emotion in Pétain's austere countenance. One could easily mistake his frigidity of manner for insolence. He neither invited nor received cordiality from anybody. He was, however, energetic, versatile and placid. His resourceful mind could conjure up a thousand devices and expedients at a moment's notice to cope with a sudden crisis in a battle or with cantankerous personal issues. But though alert and spontaneous, he was by no means a deep thinker, or an inspired and brilliant genius. Yet he was an ideal leader for the French army during the dreadful campaigns of 1917, the ideal defender of Verdun in 1916, and the ideal medium for the execution of Foch's strategic measures during the battles of 1918. His tasks were ones which just called for tactical dexterity, and a considerable amount of plodding, routine spade-work. Pétain discharged these tasks efficiently. He was the right man in the right spot.

In the fighting during the early days of August, 1914, Pétain's brigade did such excellent work that he was given command of a division on the last day of the month. At its head he fought brilliantly and stubbornly side by side with the English at the Marne and the Aisne. When the "running match" to the sea began, and Joffre was forming new units for his new front, Pétain got charge of a corps in Foch's army group, which he held from October, 1914, until June, 1915. In this post, too, he showed great tactical skill and was extremely successful. In the second Artois battle in 1915 he took by a clever coup from the Germans after heavy fighting the coveted and highly important Vimy Ridge. This exploit was a fitting prelude to his subsequent performance at Verdun. Unfortunately through shortage of reserves and blunders on the part of the higher command it proved a barren victory. Yet this feat attracted the eyes of everyone towards Pétain; it was the one bright spot in the murk of the dreary, protracted fighting. Foch spoke in very generous terms about Pétain, and Joffre had no hesitation about entrusting him with the command of an army before the war was quite a year under way. Just then the prelude to the great autumn battle in the Champagne region had started, and Pétain's army pounded the German front with dogged persistence. He would have effected a break through had not reserves been hurried up from the east to save the tottering enemy lines.

In the beginning of 1916, when everything looked bright for the Germans after the defeat of the Russians and the Serbians, Pétain's now famous army was withdrawn from the front, and placed at Joffre's special disposal with a view to swinging it around at once at any particularly menaced objective. Pétain had so far proved himself a clever tactician in an attack; now he was to stand his test in defensive action. Two days after the German attack on Verdun he was given command of that front. He had just arrived at Verdun when Douaumont fell. The order for evacuation of the sector was given. The forts were doomed. Yet Pétain's strong hand and phlegmatic poise saved the situation. It was just the kind of job that brought into full activity all his

latent capabilities. To begin with, he had the stamina in him to control his own nerves in those days of tension, he exercised all his ingenuity to steady his tottering front lines, and he invented a thousand expedients to ward off fresh perils which menaced every minute.

Owing to the speed with which the German and Austro-Hungarian heavy artillery put forts out of action in the early days of the war, the French fortresses were regarded as hopelessly out of date and were allowed to fall into decay. In many cases the guns were removed. Attention was concentrated on earthworks for defensive purposes. But Pétain decided to make use of the forts, and started repairs on them promptly. He then equipped them with modern guns, and they very soon proved splendid bulwarks of defence. In provisioning the defence works, too, Pétain showed marvellous resourcefulness. Only a single road and a light railway track were available, and both were sometimes under long-range fire. Yet Pétain succeeded by working out all the details of his programme with meticulous accuracy in bringing up within one week 190,000 troops, 2,300 wagons of ammunition and sufficient provisions for hundreds of thousands of men. He also arranged for the systematic transport of the wounded to the rear. To assist in coping with this complicated traffic problem, he had 4000 motor lorries plying regularly in accordance with a fixed schedule. Dozens of divisions made use of the one light railway and road. It was owing to Pétain's resourcefulness and organising ability, as well as to his poise and iron nerves, that the fortress held out, and in consequence the German army suffered its worst defeat since the Battle of the Marne.

After the first danger had passed Joffre got rather tired of the smouldering battle around Verdun. He was now altogether preoccupied with preparations for the Battle of the Somme. Pétain still took division after division from him, however. Falkenhayn's sinister aim "to bleed France white" was behind the fury of the German guns. In March, when the fiercest onset had passed, Pétain adroitly straightened out his front line a little here and there, but set his face resolutely against any

suggestion of a counter-attack. His stand was the first indication not only of the tactics from May, 1917, until March, 1918, but also of a slight waning of his popularity among certain politicians and fire-eaters.

On May 1st Pétain was put in command of the army group to which the Verdun army belonged. It was a slight promotion for him, as Nivelle, the energetic young general, who had the reputation of being particularly keen on an offensive, had been marked out as his successor. And, true to his reputation, Nivelle started a counter-attack at the end of the month. Pétain, who saw the way the wind blew, gave his approval to Nivelle's initiative, but entertained doubts about its wisdom. As a matter of fact, its results were negligible. A reaction followed swiftly. There were new heavy attacks by the Germans. Vaux fell. With remarkable dexterity Pétain patched up anew and consolidated his wavering front. In the end of June came the third attack, in the beginning of July the fourth. Pétain weathered them all very cleverly with his nibbling minor engagements. At length the Battle of the Somme brought in its train a relief of the tension at Verdun and afterwards a complete cessation of the attack. Pétain utilised the lull to repair the fortress, until the time appeared ripe for him in October, when the Germans, utterly exhausted by the Somme, swung round to the east against Brussilov and the Roumanians, to act on his own initiative. He gave the temperamental Nivelle a free hand for minor offensives. These were once more brilliantly planned and executed, and attained definite results. Douaumont was recaptured.

Meanwhile Joffre's hour had come. A change in the supreme command of the French army was inevitable. As there was no question of Castlenau, Pau or Foch succeeding him, the choice lay between the two successful generals, Pétain and Nivelle. Both had risen rapidly from lower grades owing to their own achievements, both had been tried in battle. The choice fell upon Nivelle; he was young, he was eager for fight and he was daring. He had on his own initiative carried through at the right place at Verdun a series of successful coups. They had already almost forgotten at headquarters that Pétain had

saved Verdun. They only remembered that he was cautious-cautious to the limit of stagnation. On the other hand, Nivelle's career during the last few months had been dazzling. Pétain looked askance at the new system of introducing surprise tactics into offensives on a large scale. The unduly great risks that Nivelle's optimism induced him to take did not appeal to him. He objected especially to the fact that Nivelle had assigned to his army group a certain sector of the attacking front, as he did not deem it advisable. Nivelle promptly gave that sector to another army group, and Pétain took no part in Nivelle's great offensive.

Nivelle's offensive began under the most unfavourable auspices. The Minister for War, the Premier, even the very President of the Republic were influenced and prejudiced by opponents of the new scheme. They held systematic inquiries and war councils, in which Nivelle had to defend his plans and tactics. Confidence in his leadership was consequently either deliberately or unwittingly undermined. And then there were other factors of the greatest importance that influenced the trend of events. It had been originally intended that the attack should be made on all fronts in conjunction with the other allies. Instead there came the Russian Revolution, and Italy was not yet prepared. Then followed the German retreat to the "Hindenburg line," which ruled out a huge sector of the projected line of attack. On the other hand, America had definitely joined the Allies. Nivelle was wondering whether it would not be better to wait for them and economise his forces. But even Pétain could not give unconditional approval of such an idea. He pointed out in the councils on the subject that they must take into consideration the attitude at headquarters. A big offensive was expected, and it was psychologically out of the question to shirk it. The English had already begun the attack on their own account. It would never do to leave them in the lurch. The only other course that Pétain could suggest was an enterprise in Italy.

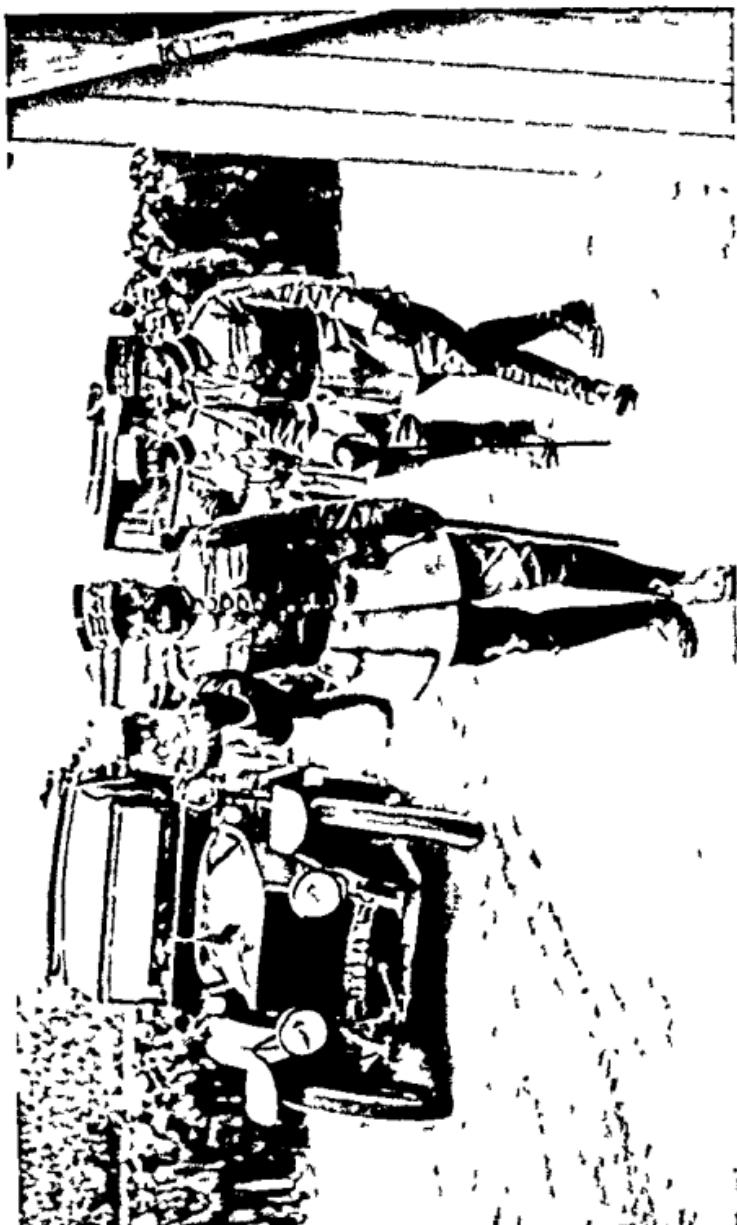
On account of these internal and external reasons Nivelle decided upon the offensive. Unfortunately owing to the publicity that had been given to the preparations

for the attack, the Germans were fully aware of every detail of its plan. Nivelle with his expansive enthusiasm allowed even subordinate officers to get full details of the projected offensive. Two copies of these plans fell into the hands of the enemy in the course of minor engagements. The result was inevitable. The great offensive was practically a complete failure.

The inevitable reaction was a sudden fit of depression both among soldiers and civilians. That internal canker now began to sap the French army which had undermined the Russian army since the beginning of the year. The sudden change from the optimism felt by everybody to utter despair, as the result of a complete and bloody defeat in such a short space of time, had been too much of a shock. After two and a half years of dreary warfare, neither the people nor the army felt equal to the strain any longer. They were suffering from that hopeless defeatism which started in the Russian army after they were two years at war, and in the Italian army after a similar period in October, 1917. Austria-Hungary, which owing to its multi-lingual population and its strong Slav element had the least solidarity of all the belligerents, had gone through its severe phase of war-weariness on the Eastern Front, only, however, during the Brusilov offensive. It had then been fighting for two years. On the Western Front the Germans, in spite of persistent fighting, never showed any symptoms of war-weariness before their first severe reverse in July, 1918. It is only by instituting a parallel with these phases among other belligerents that we see the French crisis in the spring of 1917 in its proper perspective.

Pétain had extricated himself adroitly out of the mess. Personally he had taken no part in the attack ; in fact, he had uttered a note of warning about it, without, however, definitely taking steps to dissuade Nivelle from it. He, the far-seeing and clever skirmisher, organiser and tactician, appeared now in the role of the chosen protector of the army in its hour of need. If Joffre had failed with his attrition butchery, and Nivelle with his fire-eating coups, the country had Pétain to fall back on. But as the authorities did not want to aggravate the scandal by giving undue publicity to it, they left Nivelle

Imperial War Museum
THE ARRIVAL OF MARSHAL LOCH AND GENERAL WAGNER AND MR JOHN THOMAS TO MEET THE KING AT HINCOLD



for a few more weeks in his position, and created for Pétain the new post of Chief of the General Staff, which meant that he was chief military adviser of the Government. He suggested that the *morale* of the troops should be improved by a series of reliable, carefully planned minor coups with a minimum sacrifice of life. Nevertheless the army showed more and more clearly the most obvious symptoms of defeatism.

Nivelle could now be disposed of with good grace, as, to cap his many military miscalculations, he had only a very qualified success in coping with the unrest in the army. Pétain was appointed as commander-in-chief on May 15th, 1917, four weeks after the beginning of the French offensive, and two weeks after his appointment as Chief of the General Staff. He recommended Foch as his own successor. Foch had previously recommended him. It was also at Pétain's suggestion that Foch, after he had been relieved of his command, had been given the office of military adviser to the Government.

As commander-in-chief of the French army, Pétain had to deal with a new set of problems. He had to restore the shattered discipline of the troops, and stem the rising tide of disorderliness. He was an ideal man, too, for tackling a difficult task of this kind. With marvellous tact, and largely owing to the co-operation of his excellent body of officers, he adopted various devices for restoring things to the normal. Sometimes of late, the furlough list had been running up to the extraordinary figure of 350,000. Without having recourse to a drastic code of rules or reorganising his front line he was able to solve the furlough problem adroitly—an exceedingly delicate problem which, if handled by a bullying martinet, might have fanned unrest into open revolt. His great gift of speech, his personal integrity and his pleasing address helped him tremendously in coping with this task.

The moral stimulus which the Austro-Hungarian army received from German units in the fight with Brussilov, and which the Italians got from the waning of the vigour and *élan* of the enemy on the Piave, and from the aid given by the French and English divisions, was given to the French during those anxious weeks by the entry

of America into the war. Already the very sight of a handful of Americans in uniform gave courage and confidence to the Government. In a psychological sense America had already won the war. Now that the tension was relieved, Pétain felt that he could give the order for a complete rest for the French army. That rest was broken only by occasional very minor coups where victory was certain. At the end of the year there followed the well-planned, more ambitious surprise tactics before Verdun and on the Aisne as well as occasional co-operation with the stubborn unyielding British army slogging away at its battles in Flanders. In this way Pétain also deprecated the criticism of those who either did not understand, or did not want to understand, the inactivity of the French army. Upon the whole this attitude was quite justifiable under the circumstances. Still one can hardly call it a feat of generalship, especially as the Allies were far stronger on the Western Front than the Germans both in man-power and in armaments. One great service rendered by Pétain was the fact that he kept the enemy absolutely in the dark as to the position of affairs. The Germans had no idea that for weeks at a stretch hardly a dozen reliable divisions stood at the front between Verdun and the Oise. The unfortunate speech of the Minister for War, who in order to allay public uneasiness announced in the Chamber of Deputies that the period of inactivity of the French army was to be extended, was a bit belated. At that time the French army had got into its stride again. That speech was a remarkable counterpart to the Peace Resolution of the German Reichstag in 1917. The reactions of the latter were, however, much more far-reaching and disastrous. The ill-timed speech of the Minister for War was the only mistake in the otherwise extremely practical support given to Foch and Pétain by the Government. After his Verdun achievement Pétain rendered another great service to his country by the diplomacy he showed during the anxious weeks when the menace of complete collapse overshadowed it.

Pétain fully agreed with Foch in the maintenance of a defensive policy with occasional minor offensives, with a view to waiting for America to take her part. When

Italy was severely shaken by the Caporetto and Tolmino coup, Pétain, who had already visualised himself as the future generalissimo of the Allies, wished to go himself to the menaced front. It was a bitter disappointment to him when the Government sent Foch, and it was the prelude of certain symptoms of friction between the two generals. Foch, like Falkenhayn, was a defender of the system of holding on doggedly to a position, no matter what the cost, while Pétain advocated the more elastic method, which entailed less bloodshed, and allowed time for bringing up reinforcements. In this respect his views were similar to those of Hindenburg and Ludendorff. These divergent theories naturally led to a certain amount of confusion in efforts at co-ordination.

Up to the departure of Foch to Italy Pétain through ulterior motives had always been an ardent advocate of the idea of a unified command on the Western Front. With the vanishing of his own prospect of getting the post, he started with great astuteness and in conjunction with Haig to oppose it by devious means. Too shrewd to oppose boldly the provisionally appointed Supreme War Council, the personnel of which included the Ministers to whom he was responsible, he insidiously carped at its decisions. He maintained very logically that it was just as difficult to conduct a war in conjunction with a Supreme War Council as with an executive committee. But he deliberately closed his eyes to the fact that these external forms were psychologically the necessary preliminary steps towards attaining the ultimate goal of a unified command.

When Haig had given up the idea of an offensive owing to the great difficulty in getting reinforcements, both Pétain and he strongly advocated complete inactivity on all fronts until the arrival of the Americans in sufficient force—if need be, until 1919. Foch, on the other hand, favoured counter-attacks as far as possible. Pétain and Foch also held divergent views about the Supreme War Council. Both Pétain and Haig declared that they were unable to comply with the resolution about the installation of an inter-allied reserve force. A decision in opposition to Pétain's view was definitely arrived at on February

1st, 1918. It was a definite blow to him, but he would not admit that he was beaten. He left no stone unturned to have the decision reversed, and intrigued so tactfully in conjunction with Haig against the Supreme War Council, that on March 14th, a week before the beginning of the German attack, both the projects of the counter-attacks and of a common reserve force were shelved. The protests of Foch and the Americans were disregarded. The cunning Machiavellism of Pétain and Haig had scored a complete victory. Yet it was a victory that was destined to lead both Pétain and Haig and all the Allies with them to the verge of ruin.

Pétain's main argument was that he had made definite arrangements with Haig for mutual support which were far more workable than complicated instructions through the medium of committees. In January he had given Haig a verbal promise of the support of about twenty divisions. But on the very day that he had won his victory in the Supreme War Council, he wrote saying that he could only arrange for six divisions and airily dismissed his previous verbal undertaking. He had his own very urgent reasons for doing this. He definitely expected a German attack not only against Haig, but also his own front in Champagne. He had placed half of his reserves according to plan, but in complete ignorance of the German intentions on the front between the Argonne and Switzerland. The greater part of the remainder were stationed in Champagne. Only the six divisions promised in writing were in Haig's vicinity. And so his forces were scattered in such a way that the most unprotected point was just where his army was in contact with the British. The same thing occurred in the case of Haig's army. Each of the two generals had depended on the other for the reserves promised for this weak spot. The German feint manœuvres worked out brilliantly. The offensive crashed down on March 21st precisely upon this unprotected point of contact between the two armies.

When on the two first days of the attack Haig asked for the six divisions which had been promised in writing, Pétain readily sent them to him. But when Haig asked for further help, he did not get it until there had been a

good deal of bickering about the matter. On no account, however, would Pétain allow any divisions to be taken from the neighbouring Champagne front. They had to be drafted from Alsace-Lorraine. This entailed loss of valuable time.

The English yielded ground more and more. Pétain saw that their position was almost hopeless. He doggedly pinned his trust in the Champagne offensive. On March 24th he issued instructions to his troops to regard the maintenance of contact with the English at the Ainsiens sector just as a subsidiary goal, to be aimed at, "if possible." It was a grave miscalculation of the situation; in fact it was one of the most serious blunders made during the course of the war. A loss of contact between the two armies, without any consideration of the possible outcome of the Champagne attack, which proved a false alarm incidentally, might have meant a loss of the war before the Americans took a part in it. The Allies were in imminent peril. Just as the German army could not fight without the assistance of Austria-Hungary, before the Russian menace was past, the French could not fight without the help of the British. Pétain was incapable of visualising the Western Front in its entirety. He could see nothing beyond the French army and French interests. Haig, who was the immediate victim of his blunder, raised the alarm.

When Foch took over Supreme Command on March 26th, Pétain placed himself at his disposal with whole-hearted loyalty. While he was still in attendance at the council of the Allies, his chief of staff had on his own initiative removed the reserves from Champagne. On his return Pétain approved of the step. Freed now from the grave responsibility of deciding between the English appeals for help and the safety of his own troops, he did his utmost to lighten Foch's task. Needless to say, he never availed himself of the right of appeal to his Government against Foch's orders, a right which he had in common with all the other army commanders. At the end of June the French Government very properly cancelled this right in his case.

When the Germans swung round from the British to the French Pétain's forces were surprised and badly shaken

by their first onset, just as Haig's had been previously. A stubborn defence was put up at Chemin des Dames. He suffered a very severe reverse there in May. He had failed to profit by the experiences of others. Both Foch and he were exonerated from all blame, and were stoutly defended afterwards by Clemenceau in the Chamber of Deputies. The trouble blew over with the appointment of a new Chief of Staff for Pétain. Taking all in all, it was a generous attitude on the part of the French Government towards a general who had met with a reverse. The second German attack on Pétain's front in June was by no means a surprise, however, and was held up stoutly. Owing to a remarkable stroke of luck he got plenty of information in advance about the third attack in July. On that occasion his mobile defensive methods were displayed to the best effect. The first line trenches had been practically abandoned and a sturdy and effective resistance encountered the Germans when they tried to break through the system of lines behind. Once more Pétain showed himself in his real role as a clever tactician. Liberated from the anxieties of strategic deploying, he put up a magnificent defence.

In the subsequent offensives he prepared for every attack most systematically with heavy preliminary barrage, tanks and aircraft. He had ample supplies of shells, and took care to use them very liberally as a prelude to an infantry advance. Recent successes had somewhat improved the *morale* of the French troops which had been very prostrate since May, 1917, but Pétain felt that he could not rely too much as yet on their stamina. He economised their strength to the utmost of his ability, but despite this they had reached the end of their tether by November. It was only their belief that they were taking part in the last victorious push that kept them on their feet at all.

In conclusion, it is only fair to say that Pétain was fully entitled, owing to his achievements at Verdun and throughout the whole of 1917, to the rank of marshal which was conferred on him after the war. Still he was never competent for the duties of a commander-in-chief in charge of a great offensive. It was extremely lucky for him that, after a spell of bitter experience of strategic

responsibility, he was relegated again to his proper role as a clever tactician, adept alike at attack and defence. In this sphere he showed marvellous initiative, and he contributed substantially towards the final triumph of the French army.

FOCH—THE INFLEXIBLE

FOCH, the pupil of the Jesuits and the brother of a Jesuit, resembled Field-Marshal Conrad, the Austrian leader, in many respects. Like Conrad, he was a man of rather delicate build with clear penetrating eyes, eloquent with energy and intelligence. They both had the same style of long moustaches. Foch too, like Conrad, devoted himself exclusively to his profession, and would not permit himself to be swayed by any political party, or any individual, and while he was a devout Catholic, he had the knack of asserting himself successfully, too, in worldly matters. Like Conrad, he also wrote a manual on tactics, and through the medium of his friend, Sir Henry Wilson, he was a highly esteemed and well-known personage in the social gatherings of English military circles before the outbreak of the war. His mind, like Conrad's, was quick at grasping the details of any problem. He spoke in precise, sometimes unpleasantly curt phrases, and was always very blunt. He always came to the point in any discussion as quickly as possible, and had an extraordinarily persuasive power which held his audience spell-bound. He was not a fatalist, however, like Conrad, but a quiet optimist, with a deep-rooted invincible self-assurance, the outcome of his natural poise and equanimity. His salient characteristics were inflexibility, an immutable calmness no matter what the provocation, a determination to attain his objective and a quiet confidence that everything he undertook would pan out successfully—a confidence born of his deep-seated religious feeling.

His mind was less imaginative and creative than Conrad's, but it was stronger and more steadfast. Both had alike contempt for pompous display of any kind. Even at grand military parades Foch preferred to wear his plain service uniform. Both were good haters—the

one of Italy, the other of Germany. Both were sterling patriots and matter-of-fact soldiers, and fought strenuous battles with the politicians and civilian officials at home who hampered and thwarted them whenever possible. Finally they both had the great gift of inspiring trust and of instilling into their soldiers confidence in their leadership. Yet while there were many physical and temperamental analogies between the two men, there was a great divergence in the nature of the tasks that they had respectively to face.

After he had distinguished himself first at the military academy and later in his negotiations with the London War Office, Foch was appointed a Corps Commander. When the war broke out he took part in the invasion of Lorraine. Already a general of great standing as a military theorist, he quickly won such a reputation as a practical soldier that towards the end of August Joffre gave him command of the new Ninth Army. He had a difficult job—the control of the retreat of a medley of troops drafted together from all quarters. He managed to weld them together so that they acted in unison, prevented a retreat from becoming a disorderly rout, and during the Battle of the Marne withstood the fiercest onsets of the Germans. On his right flank a great gap, which through dearth of troops he could not fill, yawned. Unflinchingly he faced the storm, only yielding inch by inch, and after a while summoned up reinforcements from his left to save his menaced right. And then when the German offensive waned he decided that the time had come for him to make a stand at last. Exhausted as his men were after their rearguard fight, their efforts at retaliation were rather languid, and Foch felt the need of caution in the anxious plight in which he stood. For the second time within a few weeks he was promoted by Joffre.

When the concentrated movement towards the sea started, Foch was given the northern command, and had not only to protect the Channel Ports, but also to make a thrust at the exposed left flank of the Germans with a view to menacing their new positions between the Oise and Verdun, and forcing them to evacuate France. The seaward movement fizzled out. The Germans failed to

take Calais and Boulogne, and the French failed to enfilade the Germans. And yet when one considers the essentially more favourable connecting links and position of the French, their failure to seize the opportunity afforded to them must be regarded as a tactical error on Foch's part. Not even once did his tentative efforts to turn the German rear succeed. Singularly enough, this was the only opportunity that Foch got during the whole course of the war of carrying out manœuvres on a large scale. He neglected his chance. It was a type of fighting that did not appeal to him. He never succeeded till the end of the war in making up the leeway which he lost on that occasion.

Simultaneously with his appointment as Commander of the Northern Army Group, Foch was given the rank of "Adjoint" or "Auxiliary" to Joffre, the Commander-in-Chief. His new status rendered it far more easy for him to negotiate with the English and Belgian commanders-in-chief. Especially French, who held the rank of marshal, and the King of the Belgians could only communicate with difficulty with a French general whose title was lower than their own, and were forced to confer with Foch hitherto through the medium of Joffre. From the very first there had been friction among the French army commanders on this score, which was anything but helpful to the common cause. Petty questions of precedence and etiquette led to considerable tension. Consequently Foch's new rank made things far smoother during the course of the fighting between Lille and the sea. Joffre's selection was a happy one, not only because Foch was so well known to the English and was trusted by them, but because he had already shown success, initiative and tact in the delicate questions of negotiation about concerted action among the Allies.

The early attacks by the English and French were abortive. In the middle of November Foch with excessive optimism had spoken of operations around Ghent and Ostend—schemes which had been suggested by the English. On the other hand, the violent onslaughts of the Germans which started in the end of October and raged throughout November, in which Falkenhayn tried once more to wring a victory from fate, proved unpro-

ductive despite the heavy sacrifices involved. Again and again in those critical days Foch steadied the tottering Allied front. With unflinching firmness he opposed every indication of wavering not only among his own subordinates, but especially among the Allies. Although he had officially no right to do so, he adroitly welded together the strangely incongruous component military entities along the front, and made them act in cohesion. He succeeded in establishing mutual trust among the Allied armies, and in giving help where it was needed, without any regard to precedence of units or international jealousies. Even the tenacious British were about to give way when he rallied them, and gave them the motto "not to yield willingly one foot of ground, not to tolerate any shortening of the front." It can be confidently affirmed that were it not for his great moral influence, his tact and his military skill, as well as his masterly power and resoluteness, the battle and with it the Channel Ports would have been lost. The war would have taken quite a different turn. It was his first really great feat.

Once again at the time of the first gas attack by the Germans in April, 1915, Foch showed his unflinching strength of purpose. Incidentally, on this occasion the Germans were not fully aware of the extent of their success, and consequently did not reap the fruits of it at the opportune moment. One can safely assert that until the end of 1918 the co-operation between the Allies was never so thorough and never produced such splendid results as towards the end of 1914 when Foch by his sheer personality took on the role of their unofficial commander. It was his period of probation for the great task he was to take over later on.

In June, 1915, Foch lost his title of "Adjoint." The first signs of governmental disapproval of Joffre and his followers, among whom Foch, owing to his rapid promotion, was reckoned, began to appear. He was henceforth merely a commander of the Northern Army Group, and his liaison with the English began to become more and more shadowy, in proportion as the British army grew stronger and stronger and the peril of the German offensive had become a memory.

The command of the French army in the second Artois battle in May, 1915, and again in the third battle in September was assigned to Foch. In those engagements symptoms appeared of the effect of the wearing-out process, in which Foch was particularly expert. The role of strategist was subordinated to that of tactician. Smashing through the enemy lines was not in Foch's vein. In fact it was a form of attack which he regarded with positive aversion. Presumably this aversion was to be attributed partly and very naturally to a sense of impotence as far as this method of attack went, and partly to his sincere conviction, which he constantly emphasised, that the chief role of a general is to exhaust the reserves of the enemy.

In connection with Foch's theory it is noteworthy that the collapse of the Russians after a series of heavy onslaughts which were a blend of "breaking through" and enfilading, shows how this type of fighting may lead to the exhaustion of the enemy. On the other hand, Falkenhayn at Verdun and Foch at the Somme both found out to their cost that the "attrition" method of fighting demands a far greater superiority over the enemy both in men and armaments than any other type.

When on July 1st the Battle of the Somme, in which Foch commanded the French, began, both sides profited by their experiences in 1915. It was a dreadful engagement, which, apart from its very heavy toll of life, frayed the nerves of all the troops who took part in it. For months the battle raged, and resulted in advancing a few yards. The French army suffered very severely, and so, despite the official denials, did the brand-new English divisions, though in a somewhat lesser degree. Certainly the acts of mutiny and the fits of war-weariness that were so evident in the French army in 1917 were not merely the reaction of the failure of Nivelle's offensive, but were primarily the results of the eroding tactics of the Battle of the Somme. A great drawback to the attrition system of fighting is the fact that the losses of the attacker are appallingly heavy relative to the visible result attained, while the losses of the enemy cannot be calculated off-hand—certainly not by the man at the front at any rate. The *élan* which a break through with its forward move-

ment, its capture of prisoners and booty instils, is lacking. Foch was wrong in not admitting this obvious truism, and he was wrong in contending that the war would have been won in 1917 if a new Somme battle had been started in the February of that year.

It is well known that the Allies had far higher casualty lists than the Germans. The slaughter on the Somme had a most disheartening effect throughout England and France. Both nations realised with something approaching a panic that they could not with their own resources continue this process until Germany was overthrown. Their relative superiority to the foe would not stand that strain. Nothing proves this more clearly than the willingness to make peace that was so marked in London towards the end of 1916, which Sir Henry Wilson so lucidly describes as the result of the Battle of the Somme, and the fact that Nivelle's motto when he took over Joffre's and Foch's legacy was: "Under no circumstances shall I undertake a new Battle of the Somme." His assurance relieved the Allied nations from a frightful nightmare.

When Joffre felt the ground giving way beneath his feet, he relieved Foch, the general responsible for the Somme offensive, of his command. But Foch's reputation was too great for his services to be completely dispensed with. He was also the only general who, after Joffre's retirement, could be considered, on account of his high standing among the English, as eligible for the single supreme command of the entire Western Front, for which people were clamouring again. For the rest Foch had quietly accepted his reduced status with a shrewd reticence. Soon after he was given command of the Eastern Army Group, whose previous commander was detained in Russia for the time being. An attack was expected there through Switzerland—yet another calculation based on complete ignorance of German plans. After he had held his command for two months, Foch was sent to Italy in March, 1917, as Lloyd-George and several French politicians, being dubious of a decision on the Western Front, were in favour of an offensive there. Italy herself, on the other hand, was also afraid of an attack. Foch extricated himself from the rather ticklish job of

deciding between the divergent views of generals and politicians, by giving the advice which was sound enough from a military point of view that they should send on artillery at once, but merely hold infantry forces in readiness. His advice was followed, with the result that auxiliary troops were despatched in November promptly by rail. In this and other similar positions Foch showed a shrewdness that was only equalled by that of his friend, Sir Henry Wilson. They both knew how to settle military questions or politico-strategic problems with acumen and tact.

During the next few weeks Foch was again out of a job. But his time came when Nivelle was superseded by Pétain. The Minister of War, Painlevé, who had as little in common politically with Foch as Clemenceau had later on, had the shrewdness to give him an important post, and one which incidentally entailed no great risks. On March 15th Foch took up his duties as Chief of the General Staff. He was chief military adviser to the Cabinet—a post somewhat similar to that of the Head of the Imperial War Council in London. When Foch took over this office, the first symptoms of general war-weariness were seen both at home and at the front—the aftermath of the failure of Nivelle's offensive and of the heavy loss of life that it entailed. After the terrible holocausts of the Verdun and Somme battles the French people and the French army were no longer equal to the strain. General unrest, breaches of discipline and malingering were on the increase. The sick-leave and convalescence lists became a serious problem. For several months officers, especially those of high rank, could not walk through the streets of Paris without being insulted. It became daily more and more difficult of late to get fresh drafts to go to the front. There were ugly scenes in the refuge camps and in the industrial areas; in short, all those ominous signs of revolt were seen in France which paralysed the German army towards the end of 1918. Foch handled the situation firmly, but cautiously. He succeeded gradually in relieving the tension and asserting his own authority by little make-shift devices, by a judicious blend of firmness and the removal of all real grievances. He found it very difficult,

however, to cope with the hosts of poltroons and battle-scared slackers looking for safe jobs at the base, in depots, in the commissariat and in military official departments. There was no improvement in this demoralising and humiliating state of affairs until the beginning of the final campaign in the last few months of 1918. During this critical period Foch decidedly showed extraordinary tact and steered a judicious middle course between severity and clemency. And it must be emphasised, too, that he had to carry on under exceedingly difficult circumstances. He thought it advisable to give orders for complete rest for a full year, from May, 1917, until May, 1918, for the French army with just a slight qualification. And even so the tide of poltroonery could not be stemmed effectually until the final stage of the war began in July, 1918. Other important factors contributed towards this important change for the better—the increasing war-weariness of the enemy, the steady maintenance of an efficient commissariat both at the front and at the base, and, above all, the practical sympathetic support of the army by the Government. The fact that the Government did not lose heart during that critical period, and consequently gave efficient support and scope for Foch's activities, was almost exclusively due to the entrance of America into the war. It is only when one compares the predicament of Foch and his Government with that of Hindenburg and Ludendorff towards the end of 1918 that one can assess at their proper relative value the achievements of all three.

But though things began to look brighter for him now, Foch became for the first time since the war started, rather anxious. His uneasiness was perhaps most apparent in the peace feelers that he threw out during this crisis. It is noteworthy that this resolute man had recourse to expedients which were not only outside the sphere of his own field of operations, but which, as matters then stood, could never lead to a complete victory. Again and again he adjured Sir Henry Wilson and the other English generals to be cautious, not to expect too much from the French, and to try to secure any kind of a coup in the field which would tend to raise

the drooping spirits of the French people. Apropos of this it is significant to note that at the end of the Battle of the Somme the French had begun to reduce the numbers of their battalions by one-fourth.

Simultaneously with his steps for the restoration of the *morale* of the army, Foch, in conjunction with Painlevé, organised a colossal programme, to be completed in July, 1918, for the manufacture of heavy guns, tanks, air-craft, motor-lorries, poison-gas and other munitions of war. He fixed on July for the completion of this scheme, as by then a million American soldiers would be ready to take part in the fight. He calculated that superiority in munitions would secure victory, as the warfare of attrition as hitherto tried had proved abortive, and a breach of the enemy lines was out of the question. It had been arranged that America should send soldiers as these could not be manufactured, and the transatlantic shipping available was inadequate for the transport of men and munitions simultaneously. But this fundamental, far seeing grasp of the situation and the attitude of hanging fire until July, which it entailed, and to which Foch rigidly adhered, led to many bitter conflicts of opinion. The Americans were not at all inclined just to transport "cattle for slaughter"; they wanted to have complete united American divisions. The English and a considerable number of French chauvinists strongly disapproved of the almost complete military inactivity of the French. But Foch stuck to his plan, and in July his army resumed active warfare. It was a clever manœuvre of Foch to keep his army in readiness for the final campaign, and to allow the burden of the previous fighting to be borne by the then relatively stronger British. But his main objective at this critical stage was to amass an enormous amount of war material. This he considered the only means now left of securing victory. Owing to the blockade the Germans could not keep pace with him in the manufacture of munitions. And he felt that it would be a victory secured with a minimum loss of life. His mind fixed on the final objective, he weighed all the pros and cons of the case, and, actively supported by the various Government departments, he completed his plan in detail. He deliberately turned away from his

old methods of "attrition," and decided to substitute machines for men as far as possible.

Foch also turned his attention to the plight of the army of the East, whose offensive had failed, and he made futile efforts to induce the British to send reserves to France in larger numbers. The question of unity of command had been shelved for some time owing to Nivelle's failure and the enforced inactivity of the French army. Nevertheless, Foch's position as Chief of the General Staff and the constant touch with the Allies which it entailed, made him seem preordained for the office of "generalissimo." But when in 1917, after the July offensive by the Central Powers in the East, the complete collapse of Russia seemed imminent, negotiations were resumed for the appointment of a commander-in-chief.

In September, 1917, the idea of a Supreme War Council was considered. The great defeat of Italy in October gave the final impulse towards its creation. Foch, of course, was, *de jure*, debarred from its sittings, as the English opposed the inclusion in the personnel of the Council of the Chiefs of General Staffs, who were dependent on their respective governments, and insisted upon a board of independent plenipotentiaries exclusively. But *de facto* not only did Foch take part in many of the Council's sessions, which shows the prestige he enjoyed, but he gave all the necessary instructions to the French plenipotentiary, so that the latter, who was incidentally his most loyal subordinate, was just his mouthpiece. Supreme over the British, French, Italian and American plenipotentiaries were the three Premiers and Colonel House as members and heads of the Council.

Foch with his English friend, Sir Henry Wilson, paid a hasty visit to Italy to study the position there after the Caporetto-Tolmino defeat, and to report about the position of the English and French relief troops who were sent to that country. These relief troops were sent promptly, for after the defection of Russia a collapse of Italy was unthinkable both from a military and a political standpoint. Foch's activities in Italy were rather unfortunate. He gave his opinion of the situation rather hurriedly and without full knowledge of all details,

and his manner created rather an unfavourable impression upon the Italians. He underestimated the strength of the position of the Italians on the Piave, and of the adverse effect of the oncoming winter on enemy manœuvres, and overestimated the possibilities of an advance by an army of the Central Powers through fortified mountain-passes upon Milan. The French and English divisions stood by inactively, fearful of being involved in another retreat, while Italy's fate was being decided on the Piave. It was not owing to any services rendered by Foch that this line was held. It was easy to see why later on Italy refused to place its army under Foch's orders. The Italian defeat also led to the shelving of Foch's project of a winter attack in Palestine and the landing in Syria.

Foch's indirect participation in the Supreme War Council became rather limited as time went on, as might be expected from the complicated make-up of that many-headed institution. It devoted itself in the main to exhortations to America to speed up the transport of men, to the question of tonnage facilities, and to efforts to bring about co-ordination among the different generals regarding defensive tactics. On this issue there was divergence of opinion, Foch's school advocating dogged immobility, while his opponents were in favour of more elasticity of movement. Finally the questions of munitions and man-power were discussed. On the latter issue there were rather heated protests made by the French against the English. The only practical result that emerged from all this bickering was a unanimous decision not to anticipate the German offensive, but to play a waiting game. Only in Palestine were offensive tactics to be adopted—and that at the earliest possible moment.

On February 2nd, 1918, an executive committee was formed of the four military advisers of the Supreme War Council, and Foch was officially appointed as its president. The committee was to have control of a common reserve force, drafted from all the armies, which was to be held in readiness for the expected German onset. The title of "Executive Committee" was a misnomer, as it had no power of issuing orders, while the individual commanders used their own discretion as to whether they should give

effect to its findings. The inter-allied reserve force never materialised. Foch found himself condemned to waste his time in futile clerical work, and the only advantage attached to his high rank as President of the Executive Committee was the fact that he was henceforth in constant touch with the Allies, and had great influence with them. But the American Government, which in contrast to England, had from the very first been very keen on the appointment of a commander-in-chief for all the Allies, informed the French Government that Marshal Joffre, who had just completed his tour of the United States, seemed to them most suitable for the part of generalissimo. England and France, on the other hand, were in favour of Foch. Italy was rather indifferent about the issue. America later on raised no objection to Foch's appointment.

When the German offensive started on March 21st, 1918, the Executive Committee and Foch had very little power. The English, who like the Belgians had been the most ardent opponents of a unified command originally, saw that their very existence was menaced. The communication between their lines and those of the French was in danger of being sundered. The arrangements with regard to the issues involved at the moment which had hitherto prevailed between the commanders on both sides, Haig and Pétain, proved utterly inadequate in the face of the menace now overhanging them. At the general meeting of all the members of the Imperial War Council on March 26th, at Doullens, it was decided that Foch was "to co-ordinate the operations of the English and the French armies with a view to the maintenance of communications." Haig himself had rejected as inadequate a previous resolution which was less definite in terms. America endorsed the resolution.

Foch had attained his goal, but at a critical time in the midst of a lost battle. And yet despite all the parleying full supremacy of control was not as yet given to him. He had no real official title, and the definition of the term "co-ordination" was left rather vague. His position was not clearly defined until April 6th, when he was appointed both by the French and English Governments as Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies on the

Western Front, and was entrusted with strategic control. The Americans next placed their army under his command, and later on the other nations did likewise. Henceforth Foch was no longer chief of the French Headquarters Staff, but Generalissimo of the Western Front.

Foch himself, speaking about the nature of his office, apropos of his repeated disputes with Clemenceau, in connection with it, declared that in his capacity as commander-in-chief he would issue no arbitrary commands, but preferred, taking into consideration the power of the Allies and the personality of their commanders, just to offer them suggestions, and by moral suasion to convince them of the rightness of his views, and then carry them with him by sheer will-power. Commands which were carried out under protest, or against which use was made of the right of appeal to their own Government which was always available (a right analogous to that which Conrad enjoyed in his dealings with Hindenburg since 1916), were of little avail. One cannot help agreeing that his views on this question were quite sound, as we know to-day what critical issues were involved when disputes did arise in connection with Foch's orders, what a difficult path he had to tread before he attained his high office, and what serious issues were pending on the prudent discharge of its duties. Clemenceau, who had practically nothing in common with Foch save an unflinching determination to win the war, urged the commander-in-chief to deal very firmly with any of the Allied generals who questioned his commands. Clemenceau regarded Foch as a general who was subordinate to himself, and who held office just by his favour, while in reality Foch held his command now, not merely from France, but from all the Allied Governments, and he was responsible to them all. And it was an exceedingly difficult task for Foch to avoid the appearance of partisanship in dealing with the conflicting interests and claims of the various generals along the Western Front.

In the brief intervals between his duties as "co-ordinator," Foch, by his bearing, his unruffled temperament, his resoluteness and his singleness of purpose had created a very favourable impression. He revived the



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drooping spirits of the English and French generals, who were exhausted by the fight at Amiens, and inspired them to co-ordinated effort with his motto "to stick together and hold their ground." The moral effect of this appeal by the unflinching Foch in those days of tension was immense. It helped to speed up French reinforcements. Later during the critical days of the second German offensive and subsequently during the third at Chemin des Dames, Foch never lost heart, but visited the generals individually, who reacted to the inspiration of his indomitable will. And when after the July battles the Allies were longing for a rest, he urged them on to fresh endeavours, and did his very utmost not to let the auspicious opportunity slip by. The efficiency which Foch displayed as commander-in-chief was phenomenal ; it was even more of a moral than a strategic nature, and has secured for him pre-eminence for all time among the generals who fought in the Great War.

With this extraordinary power of moral suasion was associated great strategic and tactical genius. In the days when he was President of the Executive Committee, Foch had realised the importance of the Amiens sector and wished to station in its vicinity those inter-allied reserve forces which never came into being. When the great German offensive began he saw with uneasiness the danger of separation of the French from the English army. In a few curt words he had drawn Clemenceau's attention at a meeting at Doullens to this danger which was intensified by the inadequate co-operation between Haig and Pétain. The second German advance, aimed at the Channel Ports, might have been held up even more quickly than the first by reserves standing in readiness at Amiens. Foch did not permit his strategic vision to be blinded by the preoccupation of local French generals about their own sections of the front. The third German advance from Chemin des Dames, which actually had minor issues as its objective, was at first mistaken by Foch for a feint. Later on he hurried up reserves from the north, where with strategic acumen he realised that the chief menace lay, in spite of the threatened advance of the Germans on Paris. On this occasion Foch underestimated the intensity of the fight which the Germans

were waging for their subsidiary purpose, to wit, the diverting of reserves from the powerful English front.

Foch opposed with all his might the suggestion advanced again and again, especially by the English, that they should fall back a bit with a view to straightening out their front line. His ingrained objection to the system of "breaking through" made him mark out with satisfaction later points of attack in the prominent salient of the German front. The French had got a lot of previous information about the fourth German thrust, which gained very little headway. Information about the fifth was so perfect and well-timed that Foch put aside for the moment his strategic preoccupation about exposing the English front. He summoned all available forces from that sector. For the first and almost for the last time mixed units of French, English, American and Italian soldiers fought practically side by side. He had given proof of his great strategic vision during the five German attacks in 1918 which occurred in the first 115 days of his tenure of office as generalissimo. The last German attacks were devoted to subsidiary objectives, such as the diversion of reserves from the English front, as their original aims, the isolation of the English and the seizure of the Channel Ports, seemed to be no longer feasible, owing to Foch having massed reserves at strategic points. But these attacks devoted to minor issues sapped the strength and wasted the time of the enemy. The protruding salient on the German front had been a menace to them, just as Foch had desired.

In the second period of his command, beginning on July 18th, likewise 115 days, Foch displayed his genius as a tactician, strange as it may seem, while during the previous period he had distinguished himself as a strategist. The day had come for which Foch had been yearning for a whole year, on which he had at his disposal those vast stores, which ensured him a technical and material superiority over his enemy, as the result of the munitions programme which had been started in May, 1917. And his superiority in man-power was becoming more favourable every day owing to the advent of the Americans. Furthermore, the failure of the fifth German offensive on both sides of the Rhine had also secured

moral supremacy for the Allies. Foch, who had hitherto withstood every inducement to make an advance on his own account, prepared for the third day after the failure of the fifth and last German attack his first counter-attack. There was no consultation with ministers or visits from deputies. The offensive was planned very quietly, and after a very brief barrage, it was carried out with surprising swiftness to the accompaniment of large numbers of tanks and aircraft. Foch, here the cautious tactician, carried out his first attack tentatively, so to speak, just against a small, but particularly weak, section of the German front. As a result the Germans evacuated the Marne salient.

After the first test Foch became bolder. He himself stated that he clearly perceived a change in the state of affairs after July 18th. The tactician extended the front of his next attack, which faced the second great German salient at Amiens. For the first and last time during the war he placed, as a diplomatic gesture, the French troops who took part in the fight, under the command of Haig. Again on August 8th, supported by enormous numbers of tanks and aircraft, and poison-gas cylinders, he made another successful onslaught on the Germans. On the previous day he had been appointed a marshal. He did not rest on his laurels, however, but inspired the armies to further successes. During the last attack indications were quite apparent that the enemy was losing heart. Whereas hitherto he had just calculated that during the course of 1918 he would drive the Germans from the recently occupied territory, and would force a decision early in 1919, with the aid of from three to four millions of Americans, he now began to form bolder and more ambitious schemes. With keen perception he divined the psychological moment of the exhaustion of the enemy, and reverted at once to his favourite method—the wearing-down of the German reserves. But his great superiority in men and munitions permitted him now to make substantial changes in his plan of attack. He deliberately kept extending his line of attack which eventually reached from Metz to the sea. In this way he minimised his own losses, and could crush and wear down the strength and the reserves of the enemy who felt safe

nowhere now. He deliberately avoided attempts to break through; he did not feel any inclination to enter on a battle of manœuvres with the Germans whose superiority in this sphere was so well known. And so Foch fought out his final and victorious battles by tactical, one might almost say mechanical pressure of the greater mass against the lesser. This warfare of pressure had no definite strategic objective. He had hardly any hopes of cutting off the Germans between Metz and Holland or even of "rolling up" the Meuse and Antwerp sector from the south. He knew that without doing so, he would attain his goal. "Run no risks" was his motto. He deliberately shunned the more spectacular strategic victory over the enemy. Hence he was denied the halo of the romantic conqueror. Hardly ever in the course of history was the prospect so bright for a general. The superiority of the Allies in man-power and war material was tremendous. And so Foch did not seek by a bold stroke to win a victory which time would give him at any rate. He preferred safety to glory. It is extremely questionable whether he would have been able to lead the Allied armies to a real victory in the field over the Germans.

Again and again he inspired the utterly exhausted soldiers and their leaders to new achievements. He kept his eye steadily on his goal and following out his plan he extended his offensive at the end of August by combining the two previous lines of attack into one, in order to carry on operations towards the end of September from Verdun to Arras, and in the end of October to extend them to the North Sea. In the middle of November Lorraine was to be included. This method of fighting could only be effective when the aggressor had enormously superior forces while the enemy was getting exhausted. And it was only by extraordinary efforts that the English and French themselves could meet the demands that such tactics involved.

Sir Henry Wilson in his graphic description of the state of exhaustion of the Allies towards the end of October, says that the English were calling up their very last reserves to fill up the gaps caused by their heavy casualty lists, while the Germans only needed an extremely small

number of divisions to hold out against the ebbing strength of the attacking French army. And even under the most favourable circumstances a method such as Foch employed could only hold forth temporary and limited possibilities of success. Otherwise why did he not march to Berlin? We may rule out his own sophistries and equivocations regarding this question. "Safety first" was Foch's motto, and keeping it in mind, he bided his time, and at the most favourable moments he kept nibbling away at the weakest spots on the enemy's line. It was a series of "attrition" onsets carried on with a progressive ratio of violence to the inevitable conclusion. It was the "wearing-out" process developed into a fine art.

Foch, backed up by the Americans, and against the wish of the British, stood out for rigorous conditions in connection with the Armistice. His hatred of Germany and particularly of Prussia—"that nation of robbers since the days of Frederick II—that race that was ever boasting of its crude mechanical and industrial civilisation"—was implacable; it was as unflinching as his own nature, and remained unchanged and unchangeable during his remaining twelve years of life. To deprive Germany of the Rhine-land was in his view the most important objective of the war. It led to embittered disputes between himself and Clemenceau. Peace caused a breach between these two men whom war had united in the interests of France. He never forgave Clemenceau for allowing himself to be cheated out of the Rhine-land by an agreement with England and America—an agreement which later on was shelved. The invasion of the Ruhr he defended stoutly—its failure he attributed to an error in tactics. And yet he never expressed any definite views about the solution of the post-war difficulties between France and Germany. It is also significant that as the quarrel between the two nations dragged on, he began to doubt himself about the possibility and the effectiveness of military intervention as a solution. Foch was a very great soldier, but not a great politician.

Foch will live in the hearts of the French people and of many among the Allies as the commander who led side by side the hosts of millions belonging to three

nations in their greatest and most difficult battle, and secured victory just when the outlook was most menacing. He will also be remembered as the general who never flinched from the days of the Battle of Ypres right to the end—the general who led his men step by step to victory—the general who always seized his opportunities, and exploited them to the utmost. Were it not for his iron will-power Germany would not have collapsed so suddenly at the end. In fact, were it not for him, there is no saying what the issue of the war might have been. Foch earned with thorough justification the reputation of having won the greatest war in the history of the world. His achievement was the result of clever leadership, strategic vision and dexterous tactical skill. A man of unswerving purposefulness he stood out among all the generals of his time as an example of untiring and unfailing grit. And he will go down to history with Conrad, Hindenburg and Ludendorff as one of the four greatest leaders of the Great War.

CONRAD--THE EAGLE

FOR twenty-five years Count Beck had been Chief of the General Staff in Austria-Hungary. The old Emperor had been accustomed to his counsellor, and he did not like changing his staffs. But the successor to the throne, Archduke Francis Ferdinand, who had just recovered from a severe illness and had returned after a long period of travelling in foreign lands, took an energetic part in the management of State affairs. All the elderly generals in the army were pensioned off, and at its head was placed Conrad Von Hotzendorff, a man in whom he had placed implicit trust. For a long time previously he had been very much impressed by this lithe little man with the piercing eagle's eyes, who wrote so brilliantly and enforced his views on all his subordinates, however unacceptable and distasteful they might be to them. His alert and resourceful intellect made all minor objectives of his work subsidiary to the great goal of defending the empire against the menace of disintegration that overshadowed it. As was the case with Foch in his dealings with Clemenceau, Conrad had a bitter fight with the Austrian politicians in connection with the demands he put forward on behalf of the army when he urged that a surprise campaign should be sprung upon Italy at a time when Russia was not yet prepared to take a hand in the game, and Italy itself was fighting with Turkey. The dispute between Conrad and the politicians, just as had happened with Schlieffen under similar circumstances, led to his temporary resignation.

An ardent patriot and a keen soldier, Conrad was rather a brilliant leader than a man fitted for plodding along in a go-ahead manner against great difficulties. Unfortunately his knowledge of men was not great, and in his

selection of his subordinates lay one of his greatest weaknesses. This shortcoming had disastrous reactions during the Brussilov offensive. Likewise in connection with that disastrous campaign his peculiar inadaptability to conditions at the front was manifest, the result of his rather theoretic mentality—an inadaptability that was curiously reflected in his staff subordinates. The latter earned in consequence the nickname of "red-tape officers." Incidentally the part played by the headquarters staff in the actual control of operations of the Austro-Hungarian army was less than in Germany. For the rest Conrad shrank from any form of self-assertiveness. He set little store by himself, and was utterly devoid of personal ambition and vanity. He kept his eagle gaze ever fixed on the one objective—the prestige of the glorious army which for centuries had welded into a compact political entity the extensive polyglot nations ruled over by the House of Hapsburg. His appointment by the Crown Prince had the tonic effect of a brisk gale among all ranks of the army. New life permeated it under his magnetic influence. In a few years he was regarded by everybody as the incorporation of the spirit of the army. Both the soldiers and the people looked up to him with implicit confidence in the fateful days of July, 1914, and afterwards during the varying changes of the war.

When the war broke out Conrad was sixty-two, the same age as Foch, to whom he had a certain physical resemblance. The Austro-Hungarian commander opened his campaign armed with the most powerful weapon that a leader could wish for—the support, affection and esteem of all classes. The mutual moral stimulus and the energy which both the commander and his soldiers derived from this attitude were inestimable.

With unexpected *élan* and with a zest unparalleled in states with a more homogeneous population the Austro-Hungarian army entered upon its last great war. Full of self-confidence, the troops were just in the mood for a great offensive. Conrad's tactical plan, apart altogether from the consensus of all the theorists and politicians on the advisability of a policy of attack, was, like Joffre's, in accord with the national character, to which a brisk attack appealed far more than a stubborn and tedious

defensive policy. In contrast to Joffre, Conrad was fully aware of the importance of artillery. Unfortunately, the money for this purpose was not forthcoming, in consequence of which Austria-Hungary was far inferior to Russia and Germany in the number and range of its big guns. There can be no doubt that the early ultra-reckless operations of the infantry, who in numerous cases got out of hand altogether, and acted independently of their officers, culminated in utter exhaustion, the reaction of the heavy toll of life. The Austro-Hungarian infantry, though inferior in numbers, literally hurled itself against the Russians, who, apart from the fact that they were expert in defensive operations, put into practice the experience they had undergone in the Russo-Japanese war. Conrad made the same mistake as all the other leaders, including even some of the German headquarters experts. He had the ill-luck that the repercussions of this mistake were especially far-reaching owing to the peculiar character of the foe he had to cope with and the inferiority of his own artillery.

Even in the deployment of his forces at the very outset Conrad had to face difficulties. The army had at first been mobilised just against Serbia for reasons that were quite comprehensible on diplomatic grounds, but were very damaging when viewed from the military angle. This entailed a mobilising of the entire Austrian standing army against that nation in order to crush it definitely and speedily. In the midst of these operations the command was issued for a general mobilisation for the war on two fronts. Serious complications ensued, and to avoid hopeless confusion, almost all the troops originally intended for Serbia, but now destined for Russia, had to be deflected southward. Conrad was fully aware of the supreme importance of pitting his last available man against Russia, where alone the decisive blow had to be struck. The diplomatic mistake of not having declared war against Russia and Serbia simultaneously had far-reaching, disastrous effects. The troops who were first destined for the Balkans, and were sent back thence to Russia, lost some time in their circuitous route eastwards. Those very troops were detailed to aid the defending wing, which had failed in

its objective before their arrival. Surrounded from the very first by the enemy along the frontier in an even more critical envelopment than Joffre experienced, Conrad had to fight against Russia on two fronts, i.e. north and east. In doing so, he had, in contrast to Joffre, avoided any loss of contact between units, and had made his assault troops as strong as possible.

The politicians, wishing to make amends for the disasters in the Balkans which had ensued owing to their allies, Italy and Roumania, not joining in the fray, brought great pressure to bear on Conrad to prevent all the troops that could be spared being taken away from that front. Minor offensives were put in operation there which sapped the army's strength without attaining any definite goal. The plan of deployment which had been revealed to the Russians through the treachery of Colonel Redl, had meanwhile been considerably altered, so that the information they had received produced more confusion than advantage to them. Despite the well-known superiority in numbers of the Russians, Conrad had committed himself to an offensive, with a view to drawing in an effective manner that formidable force upon himself and away from Germany while the decisive battle was being fought upon the Western Front. This was in accordance with the definite pledge to Moltke. The result was that the Russian reserve forces were pitted against him, instead of against East Prussia—and that, too, despite Tannenbburg. The success which he gained against the Russians before they had marshalled their full forces could only be obtained by very speedy work.

Conrad's eagle eye seized upon a point of attack similar to the one selected by Hindenburg and Ludendorff at Tannenbburg. It was the most dangerous part of the Russian army, and led perpendicularly towards their lines of communication. The information he received about the enemy was not reassuring, and Conrad himself, intent upon his scheme for an offensive towards the north, underrated the forces drawn up against his defence wing. While success attended his efforts at the critical northern wing, the strategic defending wing which had been carrying out tactical "feint" offensives against the mighty foe, met with a reverse. Conrad

evolved a plan which was one of the most shrewd and brilliant of all the schemes of the Great War, and which was far more stupendous than the tactical move of the German wing army during the Battle of the Marne. He instructed a whole army to desist from their pursuit of the enemy in the north, and to wheel round in order to strengthen the defence wing. He then swooped down with overwhelming force upon the enemy, and immediately arranged a new plan of campaign to meet the altered position of things. His masterly achievement was crowned with success. Like Hindenburg and Ludendorff at Tannenberg, he estimated aright the clumsy obtuseness of the Russians, and strove to score a victory with what was previously his defence wing. But his forces were inadequate to carry out his scheme according to plan. Before he could reach a decision the Russians broke through the gaps entailed by his wheeling his army round, and menaced his rear. The battle had to be called off. Russian generalship was in this case decidedly more alert than it had been during the Battle of Tannenberg.

Like Joffre, Conrad fell back with his troops not merely behind his nearest defence line, the San, but farther back to Western Galicia. He had both time and leisure now for realigning and reorganising his army. New plans were evolving in his mind, and he inspired renewed energy and courage among his depleted ranks. The Germans were very much disinclined to act in conjunction with the Austro-Hungarians, and Conrad failed in his efforts to convince them of the necessity of such co-ordinated action and of the great advantages that would accrue from it. He had hoped in this way to impress a sense of their common interests on Falkenhayn, who still had his eyes fixed on the Western Front alone. One can fully sympathise with Conrad's feelings of bitterness at the thought that the flower of his army was being sacrificed for the whims of the Germans. The summer campaign of 1914 left an indelibly unpleasant impression both on Conrad and his army.

As to the opportuneness of Conrad's offensive at the beginning of the war there has been a good deal of controversy. Some contend that a defensive along the

San-Dniester line, and later among the Carpathians, would have been equally successful, and would have economised the resources of the Austro-Hungarian army. On the other hand, it is admitted by all that the offensive was the one sure way of saving Germany from an attack in the rear. Indeed the history of the war showed how earnestly Grandduke Nicholas responded to appeals for help made by the French, and on two occasions, i.e. at the end of August and in the middle of September respectively, tried to turn his attention from Austria-Hungary and against Germany. It was Conrad that thwarted both attempts. Were it not for him, the Grandduke, in spite of Tannenburg, which Conrad could not have foreseen, might have succeeded definitely in his effort to alter the trend of the war, and not only swing round the reserve armies against Germany, but even perhaps taken with him some of the troops already operating against Austria-Hungary. Of course no risks could be taken with regard to maintaining the safety of Germany's rear, on which the entire and only possible plan of campaign of the Central Powers depended. In addition to these considerations the slender defensive resources of Galicia, which was devoid of fortresses, and whose frontiers merged on enemy territory as well as the Carpathians, which were seamed by numerous passes, were also points to be considered.

Even if the Russians had at the first undertaken the campaign of an offensive against Austria-Hungary, which was easier for them and held forth promises of more speedy victory, Conrad felt that it was best to try to avail himself of the one advantage he had in face of the enemy's overwhelming superiority in numbers. He had been ready for action more quickly than the enemy, and he decided to fall on him while he was still marshalling his forces. Conrad's effort was successful, and was fully justified by his victories in the earlier battles. Incidentally, the rumour that Russia had at that date already secretly enrolled Asiatic troops for her army was without foundation.

If the two Lemberg battles very nearly ended in disaster, this was due not to the plan of campaign itself, but to its execution. The mistakes were, first of

all, the fact that large forces had been left in Serbia, and the attacks made by the east wing which was merely intended for defensive purposes, and which apart from this was weakened owing to the detaining of troops in Serbia. Both these errors should not be entirely attributed to Conrad, as the first was inevitable owing to the pressure brought to bear on him by the politicians, while the second was one of a type that all leaders on both sides committed alike in the early stages of the war. A similar mistake was made by Moltke in the early campaigns in East Prussia and Lorraine, by the Russians in the offensive in East Prussia, and later on by Cadorna in the initial stages of his campaign. The most glaring instance of a similar mistake occurred in Joffre's general attack along his entire front. A long immunity from warfare had led all headquarters staffs to regard an offensive as the one and only means of securing a victory. It was a fallacy that prevailed too, as we have said already, among all the other armies in just the same degree. The Russian army had this advantage over the other armies that owing both to its experiences in the Russo-Japanese War and the temperament of its people it had a flair for defensive warfare, and had practical knowledge of its potentialities. And it was just precisely because he had to encounter the Russian army with its own definite attitude towards defensive methods that Conrad's offensive operations with the Austro-Hungarian army turned out so very unfavourably. In addition to superiority in infantry the Russians had also the tremendous superiority of 33 per cent over the Austro-Hungarians in artillery. This latter advantage which the Russians had over him accounted to a considerable extent for the heavy losses which befell Conrad's army.

Indeed, during the first weeks of the war Conrad and his army encountered a cycle of terrible and nerve-shattering experiences. If in addition one takes into account the hundreds of miles that had to be travelled along the wretched roads in Galicia during the course of the campaign, and back again to Cracow, and then forward again to the San and the Vistula, one gets an impression of the extraordinary achievements during those critical weeks of an army, 52 per cent of which

consisted of Slav and Roumanian "brothers of Russia." One also wonders how such a heterogeneous army, after weathering this crisis, afterwards kept up the fight for four years.

While the Russian masses were regrouping, the Austro-Hungarian army and a German army advanced together for a new offensive. Conrad decided to storm the San, and to encircle the Vistula line. In spite of the inferiority in numbers of the Austro-Hungarian to the Russian army, he once more marshalled at the spot selected by him for the conflict reinforcements which exceeded those of the enemy, if not in actual man-power, at least in the number of fighting units. His plan of action and the method in which it was carried through, were alike brilliant, but, unfortunately, once more his available reserves were not adequate for the task he had undertaken. But again, as in the early stages of his campaign, Conrad, as soon as he realised the turn matters had taken, had a new plan prepared immediately and did not allow the initiative to slip out of his hands. He swung one army from the San northwards towards Poland to fight there side by side with the Germans; another he despatched to the south, to turn the San line in the Carpathians. And yet again his bitter experience in the Lemberg fighting was repeated. He had not sufficient time to mature his plans in the San battles. Outside Warsaw and Ivangorod the Germans and Austro-Hungarians had to fall back before infinitely superior Russian forces. The Austro-Hungarian flank was exposed, and a retreat to Western Galicia was imperative.

The Russian steam-roller now rumbled along towards Southern Silesia. The Germans had moved their army northwards with a view to attacking the northern flank of the Russian masses. The gap facing Silesia that was caused by this evacuation Conrad made good with an army that was not very favourably greeted by the Germans when it arrived. By this manœuvre Conrad had left Hungary open to attack. He himself, making good strategic use of the bridge-head, attacked the south flank of the Russian army to the north of the fortress of Cracow, a flank that at any rate was better protected than the northern flank, which was vigorously attacked by the

Germans. Consequently he merely succeeded in holding up the enemy—not in hurling him back. With prompt decision he devised also in this third section of his campaign in West Galicia, as in the other two sections, a new scheme, moved an army through Cracow to the south, and made a surprise attack on the Russians, who had hurriedly marshalled almost all their forces to beat off his attack to the north of the town. This sixth plan which was put through in brilliant style, secured for the commander the objective for which he had striven. The Russians were beaten and fell back to Limanowa. Conrad was rewarded for the stubbornness with which he had returned again and again to the attack. It was not in vain that he had taxed the powers of his troops almost to breaking-point.

Winter came on, and with it violent Russian offensives were launched against the western Carpathians in Northern Hungary. Conrad supported the defenders, and left the initiative for a short period to the enemy. But he soon hit upon fresh schemes. A drive through the central Carpathians was organised with the aid of the Germans. In a fierce battle that lasted for months Conrad sought to drive the Russians from the mountains and to relieve the siege of the fortress of Przemysl. The ill-luck of the first miscalculation was destined to bring another, and a much more serious one, in its train. As in the case of Verdun in 1916, great emphasis was laid on this fortress as the goal for which officers and men must strive with might and main. But the strength of the men was spent. All their titanic efforts, all their sufferings during the terrific snow-storms that swept that region, were unavailing. Division after division was rushed to the shambles, but to no purpose. The fortress fell at the end of March. It was a bitter blow, not so much in a military, as in a moral sense. The troops felt that they had been beaten, that their spirit was broken, that all their sacrifices had led to nothing. Conrad had impressed the importance of their objective too strongly on the minds of his soldiers for its failure, which was almost inevitable in that ice-bound and snow-swept mountainous region, not to have still more serious reactions. At the beginning of the new year the Russians themselves

advanced to the attack, and were only beaten back with the greatest difficulty. Conrad's failure after the heavy fighting that had preceded it had very disastrous results indeed.

Conrad had frequently been charged with not having paid any attention to the efficiency of his troops to cope with his grandiose schemes. The charge is justifiable only in the solitary instance of the winter campaign in the Carpathians in 1915. His plans of campaign in 1914, as well as his later ones, undoubtedly embraced schemes which were well within the realms of possibility. And if in spite of this only one of the six typical battles which he started and carried through led to victory, this was due to special circumstances, over some of which he had no control. What these circumstances were in the case of the early battles we have already pointed out. The later battles were waged under very peculiar conditions. The Austro-Hungarian army as a whole was from the beginning the victim of a series of misadventures. The German army had won engagements in the west and in the east. The French and the English had worried through the battles of the Marne and Ypres, the Russians had weathered the advance in Galicia ; even the Serbians had regarded their stand against the first invasion of their country as a victory. Austria-Hungary alone from the first had been engaged in a series of battles without any prospect of hope. Five times all her efforts had been in vain, five times her army had been defeated, while in the sixth engagement there was a victory in which only a comparatively small number took part. And then there were dreadful casualty lists, running for the year 1914 to 80 per cent of the Empire's entire initial forces ! No other army had suffered so heavily at the start as the Austro-Hungarian one did. Following on those dreadful initial sacrifices, came the fearful winter among the Carpathians. It is only too conceivable that these early impressions remained indelibly engraved on the minds of the soldiers, impressions of on-rushing clayey-brown Russian masses, of overwhelming artillery fire and of rivers of blood that was shed in vain. And all these successive disasters smote an army, more than half of whose units were Slav—an army that from the outset



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GRAND DUCHE NICHOLAS

could not have the firm solidarity and the zest for fighting against their great Slav enemy that the German army had, for instance. Consequently during the entire period of the war the marrow of the army was weakened at least on the Eastern Front. To this was added the great difficulty of getting reinforcements. Divisions of from 2000 to 3000 men, the creation of which in the autumn of 1918 was so much deplored by the Germans, were even then no novelty for the Austro-Hungarian army.

The accession of a German army with full strength units, and with apparently countless batteries of artillery, evoked wonder and envy, but withal confidence and trust, to be sure.

All the plans of campaign during the Great War, with the exception of Tannenberg, proved abortive; even in 1918 the Allies themselves were only half successful, so to speak. In the east, nevertheless, despite all the ups and downs of the contest, it can be maintained that Conrad and the Austro-Hungarian army broke the might of the Russian hosts. They have very good ground for claiming credit for this achievement, inasmuch as the Russian generals in the Carpathians and in the summer campaign of 1915, and finally in the autumn battles of 1916, again and again deliberately made the Austro-Hungarian army, their weakest enemy, the main objective of their military efforts, and finally exhausted their own resources in fighting it.

Conrad laid out plans that should have culminated in victory. He marshalled his forces at strategic points, and he was not to blame if these forces were not always sufficiently strong numerically, or if their *morale* was deficient sometimes. But he would definitely have been to blame if he had not always made an effort to fight against odds, and if he had awaited supinely for the inevitable defeat without striking a blow. Instead of doing so, Conrad by the boldness of his schemes, and by the energy and confidence which his example inspired, enabled his army to surmount crisis after crisis, and always feel ready to cope with the enemy.

During the Carpathian battles Conrad's active mind and clear vision had also spied out other possibilities. Twice, in February and in March, 1915, with the slender

forces available he had in vain staged relief drives for the hard-pressed Carpathian front. On the lines of the "wing" enterprises of Hindenburg and Ludendorff in Courland, and in conjunction with them, he had included Bukowina in his operations, which embraced too wide an area, however, for his slender forces to cope with adequately. He had to decline Falkenhayn's suggestion that he should send forces to the Balkans, in order to keep the road to Turkey open with the aid of the Germans, because he did not feel too hopeful about Bulgaria's joining in, but above all, because, as the Carpathian fighting proved, not one man in the east could be spared. The attitude of Italy from the beginning of 1915 filled him with grave anxiety. He invariably insisted, and in opposition to Falkenhayn and others too, that concessions to Italy would merely be regarded as signs of weakness and would lead to more arrogant demands. To cope with the Italian problem he contended that there was only one device, i.e. a victory over the Russians. This would have the effect of making Italy be more careful and deprecatory in her attitude. And his view was correct.

The position on the Carpathian front was strained to breaking-point. In consequence of Falkenhayn's persistent refusal to send reinforcements, Conrad limited his appeal for help to the very minimum, and asked for only four German divisions for his third Gorlice offensive. In the meanwhile, however, Falkenhayn had altered his views, realised the possibilities attached to the Gorlice scheme, and placed eight divisions at Conrad's disposal. In the summer campaign of 1915 Conrad gave ample proof of his capabilities as a leader, and of the successes he could achieve when he had sufficient troops to co-operate with him. It was also seen once more how correct he was in his estimate of the advantages ensuing from a battle in which German and Austro-Hungarian units fought side by side. He rightly contended that a very natural spirit of rivalry would spur both sides to enhanced endeavours, and that the Austro-Hungarian troops would develop a sense of confidence again by fighting in conjunction with the Germans after their nerve-shattering experiences. And Falkenhayn was only too well aware that the maintenance of the *morale* of

the Austro-Hungarian army was of vital importance to Germany, as she could never carry on a war all alone against France, England and Russia.

Indeed throughout the whole war all joint enterprises undertaken by the Germans and Austro-Hungarians were extremely successful. Incidentally, during the course of such conjoint operations Conrad showed great tact and diplomacy in dealing with the delicate question of precedence with regard to himself and distinguished German generals like Mackensen. He showed similar tact also when co-operating with Hindenburg and Ludendorff later.

Gorlice was a historical event of the first magnitude. Conrad was responsible for the planning of the attack, while Mackensen carried it out brilliantly and efficiently. For the first time the problem of swinging over from the warfare of positions to that of movement was solved. It was the first break through in the war. It was sprung on the Russians as a surprise, and culminated in the capture of positions over a very wide area. A means was discovered for restoring movement among the torpid masses, and for making manœuvres and encircling operations possible once more. It was a form of tactics which the Central Powers frequently adopted subsequently with success, and which the enemy, with the exception of Brussilov in 1916, only adopted in a half-hearted way during the last months of 1918, and then, too, only under exceedingly favourable circumstances. The Gorlice breach and its consequences opened, under Conrad's leadership, vistas of victory for the Central Powers such as had never before existed since the Battle of the Marne. It was a turning-point in the war. To be sure neither Conrad nor anybody else could foresee all these consequences at the time.

As in the case of all subsequent breaches made in the enemy's lines, the conquerors after a certain period came to a dead halt owing to lack of reinforcements and exhaustion, with a corresponding recuperation on the part of the enemy. And just as critical a job for Conrad as the break-through was that of getting over the seeming impasse of rooting the enemy once more out of the position in which he had finally entrenched himself. The

Gorlice breach was the only one in which this happened twice—on the San and in the Battles of Lublin, Cholm and Lemberg. It is possible that at that time by an opportune incursion into the so-called Pripet marshes a great flanking operation might have been carried out. Mackensen and Conrad were in favour of it, while Falkenhayn was opposed to it. Conrad's imperturbable calm contributed appreciably to the victory. In the course of two months after Italy had entered the war he only took two divisions from the Eastern Front. Contributing factors also were the reinforcements sent by Hindenburg and Ludendorff and Falkenhayn which were put in position by Mackensen and Conrad at the right time and place. Conrad's constellation was now in its zenith. He had led the Austro-Hungarian army step by step with their German allies to a glorious victory after they had undergone unspeakable sufferings. Gorlice, which was one of the greatest feats of the war, was mainly the outcome of Conrad's leadership and genius.

Conrad tried to overcome the third deadlock in the Gorlice campaign, i.e. the triangular chain of fortresses, after he had in vain offered troops to Falkenhayn with a view to his liberating German divisions for the Wilna operations. The Austro-Hungarian troops, left to themselves, met with a reverse in their attack on the fortresses, which showed only too plainly that they were exhausted and that their strength was irretrievably impaired. It was perhaps a mistake on Conrad's part to allow himself to be carried away by the urgency of the necessity of cutting off the enemy's facilities for making a sally.

When the Serbian campaign had been satisfactorily carried out with enormously superior forces, there was little left to Conrad to do there. After its conclusion he found himself once more at loggerheads with Falkenhayn. He desired to make use of the troops just then unemployed in the Balkans, to drive back into the sea the English and French who had rather hastily landed at Salonica. But Falkenhayn, backed up by the politicians, refused his assent. Conrad's eagle eye saw the danger clouds that were forming, but deaf ears were turned to all his warnings. Falkenhayn even disapproved of the crushing of Montenegro, as a possible rallying-ground for the Serbians.

But Conrad's own forces were adequate for this purpose without any German help. Having stamped out this smouldering fire, he secured eventually the important naval port of Cattaro and almost all Albania with just a handful of troops. In promptly dealing with those rather complicated issues he showed that he was the only general in the Great War possessed of a clear political vision. He showed similar acumen later in opposing the proclamation of a kingdom in Russian Poland, and his estimate of the Roumanian problems was remarkably shrewd. He also tried to combat the crazy narrowness of Hungarian nationalism, and was an ardent supporter of the federal system as the only possible one for Austria-Hungary. He also showed his political shrewdness in opportunely opposing the extravagant claims of the Bulgars, while Falkenhayn at first met them half-way, and only when the Dobruja question cropped up, which directly affected Germany's interest in maintaining control over the area reaching to the Black Sea and Constantinople, took a firmer attitude, and thereby let slip the proper time for regulating their relations with Bulgaria. Conrad also constantly advocated a conclusion of peace with Russia since the middle of 1915, and was quite prepared to make sacrifices for that purpose. Taking all in all, Conrad alone of the leading generals showed an extraordinarily keen political understanding and vision.

The relations between Conrad and Falkenhayn, owing to their clash regarding Salonica and Montenegro, had somewhat improved during the summer, but later on became far more embittered than ever. A new and far-reaching problem had developed, and with it came intensified bitterness. Conrad adhered to the principle for which he as well as Hindenburg and Ludendorff had always stood up since the Battle of the Marne, that "the position in the rear should first be made safe, before there could be a decisive blow dealt in the west." In accordance with this principle he had advocated an attack on Italy, after they had dealt with Russia and the Balkans. As his repeated suggestions for coping with this problem were turned down by Falkenhayn, who would not even condescend to give him any information about his

alternative plans, and as, moreover, he got no reply to his offer of Austro-Hungarian troops for the west, he decided to go his own way without informing Falkenhayn in future as to his intentions. This moment when the Allied leaders followed different paths, was the third turning-point of the war after the Marne and Gorlice.

For the carrying out of the drive from South Tyrol which had been proposed by Conrad, Falkenhayn had calculated that twenty-five divisions were necessary. Conrad could only supply some two-thirds of this force from his own army. Forthwith the question arose whether under these circumstances a drive from the Upper Isonzo, on the lines of the one in 1917, would not have been more advisable, as it would certainly have needed less troops than the one from South Tyrol. If one takes into account the "offensive" potentialities of the troops, as actually displayed in the South Tyrolean attack, and if one also visualises the comparatively favourable nature of the territory for an invading army and the lack of strong fortifications, it seems pretty certain that the Italians, despite their dense formation on the Isonzo and despite their *morale*, which, compared to its state in 1917, was relatively unshaken, would have been hurled back to the Tagliamento. In this way the local part of their task, to wit, the safeguarding of Trieste and Pola, would have been settled, but not that part which bore upon the main purpose of the war, i.e. to leave the enemy in such a state of prostration that for a considerable period he would be forced to assume the defensive, and the Austro-Hungarian forces would be free to fight on other theatres of war. It had been the constant policy of the Central Powers to seek an opening for such coups; they had done so successfully in the east and in the Balkans. Consequently Conrad chose a dash from South Tyrol, as it was likely to prove disastrous for Italy. The question whether his seventeen divisions would have been sufficient for the purpose, will, as the course of the campaign shows, never be settled. It is probable that Conrad, keeping in mind especially the unsatisfactory upshot of the Verdun fighting, had reckoned that Falkenhayn, after the initial successes, would send him reinforcements, just as the Germans in 1917, when they realised the compass of the

victory, rushed belated forces to South Tyrol. The attack was prepared and started by Conrad, who was specially well posted about the military position of Italy, in brilliant style, to quote Cramon's verdict. Although the start of the offensive had to be put off for weeks owing to the rather belated melting of the snow—a circumstance that considerably diminished the element of surprise in the operations, the attack smote the Italians like a raging flood. In an exceedingly short space of time entire chains of fortresses were swept away, and crags and mountain peaks stormed. Many authorities contend, however, that the campaign was not altogether quite satisfactorily carried through, mainly owing to the operations of the Archduke's army group. When the offensive came to a dead halt the mountain peaks and the fortress systems had all been taken. By this time the Italians were clambering on to their last chains of hills, from the peaks of which the Austro-Hungarian troops could see on the horizon the towers and steeples of Venice. Conrad still had a considerable portion of his reserves intact, and as he had shown in Galicia that he knew how to get things going again when they came to a dead stop, he was planning his next step in his campaign, when Brussilov's offensive upset everything. It is not to be wondered at, by the way, that Falkenhayn expressed the most adverse and unfair opinions about Conrad's Italian campaign, which, when all is said and done, produced incomparably better results in four weeks and with relatively trivial losses than he attained in four months at Verdun.

After giving orders for the offensive to cease, Conrad drew up a good strategic defence system, and having carefully concealed his war material, he fell back somewhat with his army—an operation which for the most part was unobserved by the enemy, and which met with no obstacles. It was a bold decision, but it was only half carried out, as Conrad kept hesitating for some weeks about bringing up reinforcements to the Isonzo front which had been considerably weakened in favour of South Tyrol. He still kept hoping that he could resume the offensive. The result was that Gorizia, on the Isonzo front, was lost. Morally it was a serious blow, and in a tactical sense it intensified the seriousness of the position

of the Isonzo defence still more. The successes of the Italians, including their victory on this front, and, taken in conjunction with the Brussilov offensive, led to the entry of Roumania into the war.

Following the victorious summer campaign, there was an absolute lull on some sections of the Austro-Hungarian eastern front in the spring of 1916, after the victory in the Balkans and in anticipation of the attack in Italy. This lulling of themselves into a fancied state of security was a serious mistake on the part of the local commanders, and they had been reprimanded again and again by Conrad for their *laissez-faire* attitude. It was only too well known that the Russians had marshalled all their forces along the German front. And when Brussilov replied to Italy's urgent appeal for help with an instantaneous attack covering the entire front, the terrific artillery barrage all along the line startled the Austro-Hungarian divisions out of their torpor. The colossal range of the heavy guns, which were fed with an abundant supply of ammunition, in addition to the mere fact of the attack itself, was a nasty surprise. The general impression among the Austro-Hungarian soldiers had been that the Russians were practically knocked out. Their sudden recovery seemed absolutely incredible. But there they were once more—endless brown battalions of charging infantry advancing under a barrage of ceaseless thunder. At many points whole regiments in the heterogeneous Austro-Hungarian army gave way to panic. It was a sudden change—a recrudescence of the terrors and the nervous tension of the early months of the war. Many officers completely lost their nerve, and the *morale* of the entire army was shattered. Russo-phobia brooded over it like a nightmare.

By a last desperate effort and mainly with the aid of the Germans, Conrad succeeded in averting the very worst. The Russians themselves had not been prepared for following up their success. The upshot of the whole thing was an inevitable development on a large scale of the German influence in the Austro-Hungarian army and a wholesale changing of generals. Incidentally, however, Conrad's demand for the removal of Linsungen was not acceded to.

Conrad had always been an uncompromising opponent of the idea of placing the Austro-Hungarian army under the control of a German commander-in-chief. Falkenhayn himself with his indefiniteness of purpose, apart altogether from his rather unattractive ways, inspired him with very little confidence. Conrad was also only too well aware how little the German generals understood about the actual position and the aims of their allies, and that they did not fully realise the awkward situation of the Dual Monarchy and its army. He was convinced that they would not be likely to handle such a peculiarly constituted host with the requisite tact. It was only too clear that Germany was making a bad job of the Polish and French elements of her own population both in a political and a military sense, and that there was even friction between various German stocks. From which he gauged that German methods would make a very bad mess in coping with the complicated problem of the polyglot peoples of Austria-Hungary. And apart altogether from these considerations, it could hardly be expected that Conrad, whose fundamental outlook was utterly different from that of Falkenhayn, would voluntarily place the fate of his country in the hands of this general who was some nine years his junior—a general too who, outside the boundaries of headquarters, had never enjoyed the full confidence of his own army, and who, up to the middle of 1916, had made no direct suggestions regarding the question of supreme command, but contented himself with rather tactless and not always successful roundabout devices. Most decidedly it would have been far easier to settle the problem, had Hindenburg and Ludendorff superseded him at an earlier date. As a matter of fact this regularisation of the question of co-operative command over the armies of the Central Powers was carried through shortly after those two generals took over control of the German army. Conrad himself preferred an intermingling of German with the Austro-Hungarian units, owing to his experience of the beneficial effects thereof, to the idea of a unified command. This idea of the intermingling of units was copied temporarily by the Western Powers in July, 1918.

When Conrad had got his men in proper fettle again

and had got German units to back them, he succeeded after months of heavy fighting in beating back the Russians who had kept up a persistent offensive all the time. Once more his army weathered the storm. Simultaneously the Roumanians who had descended upon Siebenburg, were driven back by Falkenhayn in two decisive battles. And after that followed the drive over the snow-clad mountains into the Roumanian plains in a series of stubborn battles that recalled the Carpathian fighting in 1915. Once more Conrad's leadership was magnificent and the Austro-Hungarian divisions covered themselves with glory.

In November, 1916, the Emperor Francis Joseph died. The young Emperor, full of the fire of youth, was evolving a thousand plans for the reformation of everything. The old Liberal, Marshal Conrad, who, despite his divergence of opinion with Falkenhayn, was a strong advocate of strengthening the bonds with Germany, met with very little favour in his eyes. He was too proud, too experienced and too frank to approve of all the whims of his young sovereign. Consequently there were many mutual interclashings between them.

About this time Conrad, who was a widower, married again. As he had recently lost two sons in the war, Viennese society was rather shocked on hearing of the marriage. To make matters worse, his wife was a divorced woman. Worse still, she was a Protestant. The upshot of it all was that the young Emperor refused to see Conrad's wife. The snub given in the Viennese court to his wife embittered Conrad. The last straw was when the young Emperor rather abruptly dismissed the hitherto nominal commander-in-chief, the Archduke Frederick, who had won the esteem of everybody owing to his personality and his kindly ways, and took over the command himself. And then the Emperor, to cap all, transferred the army headquarters to Vienna in order to be able to attend to his other imperial duties. Conrad protested on various grounds, but chiefly because it meant losing contact with German headquarters. Eventually matters became so strained between them that the Emperor in his abrupt manner relieved Conrad of office towards the end of February, 1917.

As his successor the Emperor appointed the younger, but less well-known, General Arz, whom he himself had marked out previously as a pliant and ingratiating subordinate. And so the Emperor deprived himself of his most competent counsellor and deprived the army of its most brilliant commander. The shadows of evening were falling over the great Austro-Hungarian army indeed.

Honoured with external marks of distinction, Conrad took charge of the Tyrolese army group. On this front he beat off Italian offensives in the summer of 1917. He strove in vain with his inadequate forces in the beginning of the winter of 1917, after the break through at Carfreit, to enfilade the Italians who had marshalled for a fresh defensive on the Piave. His urgent appeal for reinforcements for his task was at first ignored, and later acceded to when it was too late. Not only that, but the forces sent to him were considerably smaller than he had asked, although it would have been quite easy to supply the full quota he needed.

When in July, 1918, the Austro-Hungarian army was ready for its last offensive, Conrad had to lead a twofold drive on either bank of the Brenta. Just as in the case of the German offensive which started a month later on both sides of Rheims, the plan of attack had been revealed to the enemy in minute detail by spies. And just as happened later in Champagne, the enemy, mainly English and French, had almost completely evacuated the front lines, so that the artillery fire battered down empty trenches. When the fact became known a storm of anger swept the already exasperated and starving civilian population of Austria-Hungary. The only thing for it was to make a scapegoat of Conrad. Despite his elevation to the rank of Count, his military career ended as ingloriously as did the entire Austro-Hungarian army a few months later. The great commander's star had set, and the empire went down with him.

Conrad's eagle eye always detected the weak points in his enemy's armour, and he was perhaps the most brilliant strategist in the Great War. He always kept his eye fixed firmly on the great goal ahead of him, without allowing himself to be side-tracked by minor issues. He solved unerringly all the tangled problems of a war on many

fronts. His one really serious mistake was in connection with the Carpathian battles.

Conrad's unobtrusive demeanour, as well as his definiteness of purpose, won him the attachment and esteem of all, even among the leaders of the Allies. He was no extravagant optimist or visionary, who saw everything in roseate hues ; he was a fatalist and had a fatalist's tranquillity of mind—a tranquillity which he never lost. The fact that he never broke down under adverse circumstances, and that again and again he rallied for daring offensives an army whose units were drafted from a dozen nations, and instilled into it new hope and strength when it was badly shaken, and that, moreover, under the most critical conditions that a general ever had to face during the Great War, he achieved such great victories—all these factors combine to make him rank with Foch, Hindenburg and Ludendorff, as one of the greatest generals that the Great War had produced.

BOROEVIC—THE MAN IN THE SHADOW

BOROEVIC is, in a different sense to Conrad, perhaps even more than Conrad, typical of the Austro-Hungarian army in all its glory and all its weakness and in the fate which he met. By nationality a southern Slav, he was one of that considerably preponderant majority of the non-German or Magyar elements in the Dual Monarchy which remained unflinchingly loyal to their hereditary nation. False rumours were circulated at the beginning of the war that he had been shot as a spy. The Austro-Hungarian army seethed with rumours of this type, and people hardly paused to reflect that if even a small fraction of those "spy" scares were true, the army could simply not have continued to exist. More than half of its soldiers were Slavs or Roumanians. Had they been to any appreciable extent false to the cause they were fighting for, instantaneous disaster for the monarchy, and especially for the Central Powers, would have been inevitable.

Boroevic with his southern Slavonic broad face, his closely cropped hair, his round skull and his medium-sized stocky figure, had even before the war earned a reputation for an iron will and an exacting code of discipline with regard both to himself and his subordinates. He was a brave, almost a brutal, soldier, like all southern Slavs.

In the early stages of the fighting against Russia, at Lemberg and on the San, Boroevic served his first bitter apprenticeship as a commander in real warfare. In the Carpathian battles his own strength and that of his men was strained to breaking-point. Gorlice's hour of deliverance had struck. Colossal tasks remained to be done.

Italy's entrance into the war placed new duties on Boroevic's shoulders. As he had undergone the most strenuous probation of all the Austro-Hungarian generals,

Conrad entrusted him with the command of that army which was to defend the most important front—the Isonzo, Trieste, Fiume and Pola against the enemy. Boroevic, whose innate energy had assumed the consistency of steel in the fiery crucible of war, was destined in his new rôle to perform feats as glorious as those of other more fortunately placed leaders at the head of highly efficient armies—leaders whose names were on everybody's lips. Boroevic, and with him a large section of the Austro-Hungarian army, continued to fight in the shadow with mute self-sacrificing heroism—a more thankless, but no less meritorious service to his country than a dashing advance.

He was absolutely played out, as well as his entire army in Russia, owing to the impossibility of the tasks he encountered, and through the heart-breaking effect of terrible sacrifices and hardships which led to nothing, but both he and his heterogeneous troops seemed infused with a new life when they turned to face the new foe. With joy he hearkened to the summons to the Isonzo front; proudly conscious of their greater efficiency and of their victories in so many bygone battles his troops followed him. A wave of enthusiasm swept through the empire, which almost eclipsed the war-fever of the early days in August, 1914. The Austro-Hungarian army was, so to speak, restored to health again on the Isonzo front; it acted as a tonic on men and officers alike.

When the first Isonzo battle began, Boroevic's forces were less than those of the enemy by half, but he felt that they were adequate. That continued to be the normal relative percentage of the opposing armies right through all the eleven battles that Boroevic fought in that region. The Italians launched four offensives in the summer and autumn of 1915, and four times Boroevic hurled them back. The few yards of ground that the Italians gained made the short distance to Trieste seem a limitless stretch of territory. Like Przemysl in the Carpathian fighting in 1915, like Verdun in 1916 and Amiens in 1918, Trieste remained for the attackers an almost palpable and yet unattainable goal. Incidentally, the Italians, novices to modern warfare, very soon got over their initial gaucherie. From day to day they grew more tough and tenacious

in battle, and their offensives entailed a progressively increasing heavy toll of casualties on both sides.

As commander in this dramatic cycle of eleven battles Boroevic had an exceedingly difficult task to cope with. The peculiar contours of the country made the rôle of defender more difficult. The rocky and flinty surface of the ground in the plains of Doberdo and Bainsizza, which were very little above the sea-level, only afforded cover after systematic blasting. It was practically impossible to dig trenches in the usual way. The sharp jutting crags made the operation of artillery extremely difficult, and it was almost impossible to get cover from aerial attacks. The securing of an adequate water-supply was a hopeless task. And yet the iron nerves and the unremitting reckless doggedness of Boroevic surmounted all these difficulties. He very rarely emerged from his headquarters. He could not bear to set his eyes on the devastating panorama of the front. He wanted to steady his nerves for the grim ordeal of sending battalion after battalion to the shelterless open plains and the cruel crags to sure and swift annihilation. And to make up the yawning gaps in his ranks he had to ponder carefully the question of reinforcements—a question that got more acute daily owing to the very definite inferiority in numbers of his own forces. Yet, though he remained in the background, Boroevic was still an inspiring influence to his troops; in every move they made they felt the impress of his firm, sure hand and keen brain, which guided them from victory to victory. His personality was in their minds identified with the Isonzo front.

There was yet another factor that intensified the difficulty of Boroevic's task. Trieste lay right behind the front. Consequently it was impossible for him to fall back of his own accord even ever so slightly, as was customary in all other battles. He was debarred from any elasticity in manœuvring his defence. He could neither evacuate positions which ceased to have any strategic value, nor could he rest his troops with a view to making a counter-thrust later on. There was only one method open to him—he had to stick it out on the same stretch of land which had been churned and rechurned up a thousand times by artillery fire. It would be wrong to

think that these grave local difficulties crippled Boroevic in his rôle of leader ; he showed wonderful ingenuity in his allocation at the most vital points of the scanty reserves at his disposal. He had constantly to be prepared to buttress weak positions, to fill up gaps, and to come to very swift decisions about these all-important issues. The influence which his inspiration exercised on the *morale* of his troops contributed very considerably towards his success in coping with his heavy casualty lists with very meagre reinforcements. Unfortunately for himself and his army, there was no glamour or romance about the achievements on this front. There was no grandiose offensive. It was all heavy slogging for the army, with Boroevic away behind in the shadow.

When the Italians advanced to their sixth great offensive in August, 1916, the exhausted defenders lost Gorizia, a small unfortified town. This, their first appreciable success, was of great moral significance for the Italians. But Boroevic and his army were undismayed. The seventh, eighth and ninth Isonzo battles which raged during the next three months with renewed frenzy and stubbornness, while in the east the Brussilov offensives surged onward, and the Roumanian attack was repulsed, were indicative of the energy and determination of Boroevic's troops. And the upshot for the Italians was just the gaining of a few yards of ground. Their objective, Trieste, was practically as far away as ever from them.

The tenth battle went on for four weeks in May, 1917. The Italians effected a rather serious breach in Boroevic's front on the Doberdo tableland, but he stemmed it with his very last available reserves, as he had previously done in the ninth battle. The result was that his battalions regained in a few hours all the ground that the Italians had won during the previous weeks. Boroevic's strength of will and his masterly tactics had carried through another brilliant achievement. And yet, as his exploit after all just amounted to a mere restoration of the *status quo*, neither he nor his men received any laurels for it.

The Italians took over two months to recover from their serious reverse, after which they advanced with considerably stronger forces for the eleventh battle.



GENERAL ALLALJLV

Central News



Cadorna had concentrated on the Isonzo troops drafted from all sectors of the lengthy front line. The defenders were unable to do likewise owing to their limited reserve numbers and their sparse and defective lines of communication. Cadorna had made his main offensive front broad. Boroëvic, who at the start of this engagement had not even half the enemy's available number of divisions (he had actually just two to Cadorna's five), had to content himself with consolidating the southern sector of his front in the immediate vicinity of Trieste. He could no longer do so satisfactorily in a further northerly direction. The result was that the Italians, after weeks of persistent fighting, succeeded in crossing the Isonzo and gaining some ground. Such an advance, which in other battles would have been of no consequence, was in this particular region fraught with serious possibilities, owing to the Trieste problem.

Thus by the peculiar irony of fate this loss of ground, which in itself was very negligible, assumed the dimensions of a serious defeat, despite Boroëvic's wonderful achievement in preventing his far more powerful enemy from effecting a serious breach in his front.

Efforts were made to institute a comparison between the Isonzo battles and the great offensives on the Western Front. Such a comparison is really hardly apposite, inasmuch as the conditions appertaining to the engagements on both fronts were fundamentally widely dissimilar. Calculating on the basis of relative numbers, however, it is noteworthy that in the eleventh Isonzo battle in 1917 there were fifty-two divisions put in the field by Italy, against fifty-four British and six French divisions during the great Flanders battle in 1917. The losses of the Italians during the tenth battle totalled 110,000 according to their own figures, while during the eleventh they numbered 140,000. Each battle lasted approximately a month. The British losses during the worst month of the Flanders fighting in 1917 totalled 120,000 men. On the score of the relative numbers of casualties, consequently, one may certainly compare the Isonzo and the Western Front battles. In every other respect, however, there was no analogy between the two theatres of war.

The peculiar nature of the Isonzo region, which for the most part intensely aggravated the difficulties of the defence, although occasionally the clefts in the crags facilitated operations, had no counterpart on the Western Front. Neither was there on the Western Front the persistent urgency of keeping up a stubborn defence all the time, nor were the forces there debarred from any elasticity or mobility. Furthermore, the cycle of eleven battles on the Isonzo involved a definite form of attrition, which kept gnawing away all the time at the same spot. And finally in the case of no forces on the Western Front was there a constant superiority in the proportion of two to one on the side of the aggressor—a proportion that prevailed all along the Italian front.

The heavy casualty lists of the Italians confute the libel about their lack of grit in their offensives. On the other hand the average battle on the Western Front was of longer duration than on the Isonzo. The larger number of divisions available made it possible to keep the battling armies supplied with reserves, and to relieve the worn-out units. On the Isonzo both combatants had to stick at it hard all the time with their limited forces. The French, no doubt, and also the rather gauche English, were far superior to the Italians in tenacity and tactical acumen. It was these two shortcomings on the part of the Italians that enabled the Austro-Hungarians to hold out against them with such doggedness despite the relative disparity in forces. Taking into consideration all the factors we have just enumerated, we can safely assert that the Isonzo battles should be ranked among the greatest defensive engagements of the whole war.

And yet once more Boroëvic, the man in the shadow, and his troops failed to gather the fruit of their hard labours. The Italians as the result of their heavy losses, went through a crisis which was akin to that in the French army a few months previously. Boroëvic had sapped their vitality by the dogged pertinacity of his defence. During this period of weakness the surprise thrust of the cleverly led army of Bülow smote them, and resulted in a sweeping victory. But it led to no results. Boroëvic's troops had become too stiff and awkward for manoeuvring owing to their protracted defensive fight-

ing. There were lengthy halts during his advance, which were instrumental in saving the Italians on the Tagliamento from overwhelming disaster. The Isonzo commander, now promoted to the rank of marshal, took no part in the vain efforts to carry the offensive across the Piave.

The great battle in June, 1918, in Italy gave Boroevic his first and last opportunity for an offensive. The ill-advised scheme of the engagement, which had been planned at headquarters, deprived him of this chance of a brilliant coup—the man in the shadow achieved only a sectional success with a section of troops. And yet it is possible that even had the forces available been more tactically arranged, the result would have been the same. At all events his partial victory saved him from being made a scapegoat, as Conrad had been. He was destined to carry on his fight in the shadow till the end.

When in October the Italians, in conjunction with the English and French, advanced to the last attack, they secured an easy victory. But Boroevic succeeded with his old-time grit in leading his utterly worn-out troops in fairly good order across the Tagliamento. When the drama was over, Boroevic had fallen back towards the Isonzo. The last fight was finished.

The tenacious southern Slav marshal was a typical soldier of the Austro-Hungarian army—an army which under his leadership attained achievements as magnificent as the greatest victories in the war. It was not mere empty boastfulness that made him say: "No other man shall fight battles like my eleven Isonzo ones." He possessed two great essentials for a general—will-power and tactical genius. It was the possession of these gifts that enabled him to stand the strain of maintaining such a stubborn defence against overwhelming odds in the face of a series of relentlessly bitter and protracted offensives by an enemy who had enormous advantages on his side. Boroevic never got the opportunity of showing whether he was a great strategist or not, as his fight and that of his army remained to the last a fight in the shadow.

ARZ—THE CHARMING ADJUTANT

WHEN the Emperor Charles ascended the throne of the Hapsburgs in 1916 he began with youthful energy to throw open all the windows in all the stuffy governmental and military departments. He was honestly anxious to introduce improvements everywhere. The next few months saw changes in all the high offices in the Court and throughout the broad empire of Austria-Hungary. And so nobody was surprised when Conrad was relieved of office towards the end of January, 1917. The Emperor chose General Arz as his successor.

Arz had got a good reputation from the beginning of the war as the commander of a corps, and had served during the dreary months of the summer campaign in 1915 under the immediate command of Mackensen, and fought with distinction side by side with German units. For a few months later he had command of an army at rather unimportant points in the Roumanian campaign. It was at this time that he got first in touch with the then heir to the throne, who was in command of the leading army group.

Of all the commanders during the Great War, Arz was undoubtedly the one with the greatest personal charm. He represented a rather unusual type of Austro-Hungarian officer. Almost five years younger than Conrad, he was a remarkably talented and vital man, who had a flair for carrying on both serious business and light conversation with equal ease. Smoothly and slickly he got round corners and angles. He extricated himself from unpleasant situations and dangerous crises with a smile on his face and a joke on his lips. Sociable and full of *joie de vivre*, he was a jolly comrade, typical of the young officers of his day in the Austro-Hungarian army. He had a peculiar vein of light-hearted humour, and

discerned amusing or grotesque features in the momentous happenings going on around him from day to day. He was not even faintly piqued by the fact that great military discussions were frequently arrived at without his co-operation, while on many occasions his plans were definitely turned down. He accompanied the Emperor on his many journeys up and down through the empire and to Sofia and Constantinople. The consequence of these trips with the Emperor was that he was frequently obliged to delegate his work to subordinates.

Both he and his chief of staff were, despite all their other good points, rather lacking in strength of will, and either approved of or co-operated in all the caprices and innovations of their royal master, taking scrupulous care all the time not to meddle in affairs which were not strictly of a military nature.

On the very day after his appointment an imperial decree was issued which considerably relaxed the rigorous discipline of the army. It was an exceedingly well-meaning, but ill-advised measure. Arz was not consulted at all about the matter, but though he expressed his disapproval of the decree, he gave way to his royal master.

During his first weeks at the head of the Austro-Hungarian army, the first Russian Revolution, an event fraught with weighty consequences for the Dual Monarchy, broke out. Arz took the cue given by the German authorities to ground arms and await developments. He dropped the plan for a thrust on the upper Isonzo which had been suggested by Conrad.

During the course of his first visit to the German headquarters efforts were being made by the Emperor Charles and Czernin to induce Germany to give up her claims to Alsace-Lorraine in return for great sacrifices of territory made to her by Austria-Hungary. Needless to say, Arz was not initiated into this political *tête-à-tête*.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff had offered Arz a German division to strengthen the Isonzo front. It is easy to see why Arz turned down this gesture. Numerically speaking, an extra division there was rather negligible. Moreover, Austria-Hungary's self-consciousness was first fully awakened by the successes in Italy. The fighting value

of a single German division would have been more than counterbalanced by the probable loss in national prestige. Of course, the offer of a whole army of German shock troops was quite a different proposition. In the Isonzo battle of 1917, the fiercest engagement fought by Austria-Hungary, the army comprised 70 per cent of Slavs and Roumanians against only 29 per cent of Germans and Magyars. The percentages quoted bore no relation at all to the population figures, which comprised 48 per cent of Germans and Magyars, as a relatively larger proportion of the latter had been drafted to the quieter Carinthian and Tyrolese fronts.

The Austro-Hungarian army had a feeling that their achievements in the field had not met with their due appreciation among their German allies. How justified they were in their view is shown by the verdict of post-war critics, and especially in the volume written by Falkenhayn, who for two years held a position in the German army which entitled him to give an authoritative view later. There was indeed a vast and sweeping ignorance among the Germans about the peculiar conditions prevailing in Austria-Hungary.

In May, 1917, the tenth Isonzo battle started. Arz succeeded in drafting reinforcements in time from the east, so that the gains that the enemy had acquired were recaptured from him in the counter-attack. And just then the Russians began to become rather dangerously lively again. There was still a permanent force in the east comprising 60 per cent of the entire Austro-Hungarian army. This meant that only 40 per cent of their entire strength had to cope with enormously superior Italian forces.

In June, 1917, the Italians availed themselves of their excellent lines of communication to hurl themselves with all their forces suddenly against Southern Tyrol. Here, too, they were hurled back.

Simultaneously with this victory there came two mandates from the Emperor Charles, which were issued not only without the consent of Arz, but against his wishes, one dealing with matters of discipline, and another laying down regulations about the use of bombing-planes. Though he knew that these mandates

were a menace to the efficiency of the army, Arz contented himself with a feeble and formal protest against them. Months elapsed before the mandates were revoked piecemeal.

Scarcely had the tenth Isonzo battle spent its fury and the offensive against Southern Tyrol faded away, when the Russians made a tremendous attack on the Eastern Front. The first drive, which was led by overwhelming masses in close formation, was held up, but the second drive effected a breach, partly owing to the collapse of Czech units. In the counter-offensive, led mainly by German divisions, the Austro-German forces to the south of the wedge that had been driven into East Galicia, were under the command of Arz. They forged ahead through the Carpathians with amazing speed and *élan*. The Russians were driven back out of the territory which they had won in 1916, and were not allowed to rest till they had arrived at the frontier. The moral effect on the army was extraordinary. The Eastern Front was a closed chapter after the swift and dramatic happening in July, 1917.

In August the Italians staged the eleventh Isonzo battle. They had collected the bulk of their forces from all the other theatres of war, and attacked with more than double strength along their entire front. Forced back after weeks of very heavy fighting, the defenders retreated to such a depth on the northern sector of the front, that the enemy's artillery was forced to hurry forward to new emplacements. The somewhat belated reinforcements drafted by Arz from the east arrived just in time owing to this respite. The Italians, utterly played out, desisted from their offensive.

Already at the beginning of this great battle Arz had conceived the idea of an offensive on his own account. He laid his scheme before the Emperor Charles and before the Germans, but he turned down repeated exhortations given by Conrad for the sending of reinforcements for a subsidiary attack from Southern Tyrol, and thereby he not only wasted an excellent chance in Southern Tyrol, but he jeopardised the immediate following up of the Isonzo gains.

The break-through north and south of Caporetto and



was that Austria-Hungary should not incur the enmity of the Western Powers, too, in addition to the deadly hatred of all her immediate neighbours.

When the project was dropped the alternative one of a fresh offensive against Italy gained more and more adherents. The verdict which was wrongly given by Falkenhayn about Conrad's Italian programme could be aptly applied to this scheme. It was an offensive without any definite war objective. However, the Austro-Hungarian army was in an exceedingly bad way for food and it pined for the offensive as being likely to give fresh hopes of booty.

Arz at this time reorganised his army, by disbanding the special mountain troops, and forming divisions that were fit alike for fighting in the mountains and on the plains.

When the snow had melted on the Italian and Tyrolean mountains, the time drew near for the offensive against the Italian army and its reinforcements. The preparations for it, however, were started under unfavourable auspices. The original plan devised by Arz visualised two distinct and simultaneous attacks. He was anxious to atone in June, 1918, for his mistakes in the previous October. The pincers would close at last. But apart altogether from the fact that the contours of the front were unfavourable to his scheme, he lacked the very first essential for an effective double offensive, the marshalling of adequate forces for the purpose.

Owing to the fact that the military forces of Austria-Hungary were scattered about in the east and elsewhere, only fifty-two divisions out of a total army of eighty divisions were available for the imminent decisive battle. It seemed as though Arz had not realised the gravity of the situation. The original plan was thrashed out again and again in numerous conferences. The "charming adjutant" affably met all his subordinate officers half-way. The upshot was a chaotic plan of campaign, which added four minor offensives to two major offensives! And for none of these were the requisite forces forthcoming. Arz swallowed his swelling doubts, and let things run their course in semi-optimistic, semi-stoical mood. Everything would pan out all right, he tried to

Command. A general of the royal family had made this statement to him in a dramatic fashion in the presence of witnesses. The Emperor, not wishing to lay extra emphasis on the miscarriage of the offensive, would not accept the resignation tendered by Arz. It was rather unfortunate for himself that he did not do so.

The Austro-Hungarian army was still to all appearances a compact united body. But the troops were starving. Their boots, tunics and shirts were in tatters. They were dying by tens of thousands of marsh fever and other diseases. During the period between July and the middle of October—a period of complete military inactivity—the army had dwindled by half. The extreme privations which they endured and which were greater even than those of the Germans at the same period, were endured by the rank and file with their typical mild stoicism. It needed more cruel blows than they had got so far to wound them mortally.

After the failure of the June offensive Arz had agreed to the drafting of four divisions to the Western Front. It was rather belated help and quite inadequate. Moreover, the idea had to be dropped very quickly as news came that the Balkan front of the Bulgarians had collapsed, and a new defence front had to be drawn up there. Arz succeeded in doing it only by straining his available resources to the very uttermost.

The internal collapse of the Danube monarchy could not be stayed any longer. The food problem was very serious throughout the whole area of the Central Powers, but it was far worse in Austria than in Germany. The social and national difficulties that existed in the Danube monarchy were only known in a much milder form in Germany, and as the war drew towards its close, those difficulties were intensified. Indeed, the wonder is that the crash of this ramshackle empire did not occur long before that of the great, wealthy and nationally homogeneous Germany.

While the frenzied onsets of the enemy and the wranglings of the politicians had relaxed all the internal bonds of the State, political agitation had, strangely enough, never properly penetrated the army before the middle of 1918. Still it was merely a matter of time, no doubt,

GRANDDUKE NICHOLAS—THE WEAK DESPOT

LIKE Falkenhayn, Grandduke Nicholas disappointed all those who expected bold measures from the magnificent-looking man of fifty-eight. The Russian soldier waxed enthusiastic over the picture that he conjured up of this gigantic demi-god. He visualised him as speeding to the menaced positions on the front on his bounding charger or in a magnificent motor-car, and, riding-whip in hand, putting things ship-shape again. While among the Germans dissidence about victory had a paralysing effect upon all their decisions in every field, the grandduke combined with a mystical and religious reverence for tradition and Czardom, a hankering for Western liberal and modern ideals.

He was rather abrupt of speech and arrogant in manner, and was ready to fly into a violent temper on the most trivial provocation—often without provocation at all. But if the victim of his hasty outbursts stood up to him boldly the weak despot forthwith dropped his bullying tactics and assumed a deprecatory tone. If he roared at a subordinate officer and the latter had the guts to roar back at him Nicholas collapsed like a burst bladder.

Nicholas was a blend of East and West, of Asia and Western Europe. Intellectually and emotionally he had the characteristics of both continents. He was a congenital despot, and he aimed at the paradoxical status of being an Asiatic-Western European. He loved mighty, holy, ancient Russia, and was dazzled by the magnetic charm of France. He did his best to bridle his despotic tendencies, and was rather hopeless in the tedious and uncongenial legerdemain of bureaucracy and officialdom.

Nicholas hated the Germans. His hatred was fed by vague dreams of victory over the detested Teuton. His admirers looked on this uncle of the Czar as the champion

of the war-like Pan-Slavic grand-ducal party. They contrasted him to his own advantage with the weak Czar and his German wife. But Nicholas was by no means the strong man his admirers took him to be—or pretended to take him to be. The romantic glamour of warfare allured him, but he cut a sorry figure really as commander-in-chief. For all his swaggering and bullying, he was at heart just a fatalistic Russian, devoid of any real initiative, an obedient servant of the anointed Czar.

A visit which he paid to Paris, shortly before the war, as the representative of the Czar, had intensified his occidental leanings. He strove in vain to reconcile the stark realities of the Russian Empire and the oriental Slavonic temperament with a Western outlook and ideals. But as in his inmost heart he had no faith in the ethics of autocracy nor in its future, although it was impossible for him to sunder his association with it, he remained to the end a weak despotic supporter of a weak despot.

His appointment as commander-in-chief was a surprise to everybody—himself included. The general impression had been that the Czar himself would take over supreme command. Incidentally it was only at the very last moment that for a variety of reasons the Czar changed his mind on the matter. Consequently the Grandduke undertook a job for which both psychically and technically he was quite unfitted, although in previous years he had a good insight into the activities of high-placed military officials. Still he was to the soldiers the personification of the popular national conception of the Royal House. But the imposing princely general instinctively shrank from the glare of publicity. Moreover, his liberal views made him obnoxious to many aristocrats as well as to many high-placed politicians and office-holders. The Czarina especially regarded him with both hatred and fear. She hated him because his Western outlook made him openly hostile to Rasputin's mountebank capers and knavery. She feared him because she overestimated his worth, and regarded him as the superman that he was in the eyes of a considerable number of people who were totally ignorant of his character and his aptitudes. To her he was the "anti-Czar"—Nicholas III. And yet the Grandduke simply

regarded himself as the representative of the Czar—the weak Czar whom he at once revered and despised—and it was under the influence of this honest and rather vague attitude towards his monarch that he accepted supreme command.

The Russian mobilisation and deployment schemes had, of course, been drawn up long before the outbreak of war by a frequently changing headquarters staff in conjunction with the Ministry for War. The Grandduke had as little to do with the matter as he had to do with the appointment of the higher officers, and especially those of his own staff. Moreover, he did not make the faintest attempt at even any change in the personnel of his staff after he had been appointed, but just left everything as he found it. This was not the result of indifference, but of an honest conviction that any sudden change he might make in the machinery already in operation would hamper, rather than help, mobilisation. The extraordinary fact that his second-in-command, the recently appointed chief of staff, showed absolutely no strategic aptitude and delegated everything to his deputy, and that, moreover, he had had scarcely any experience as a military officer, but was just an ex-civil servant, goes to show how disinclined the Grandduke was to interfere in any way with the machinery, however faulty it happened to be, that was handed over to him. He also took very little trouble about keeping in touch with the military headquarters in Petrograd. Frequently clashes occurred between him and his Petrograd overlords. The War Minister especially, Sukomlinov, a powerful strong-willed man, was rather hostilely disposed to Nicholas.

At the beginning of the war the Grandduke, following his Pan-Slavic bent, had not only issued a manifesto that rather jarred on the Petrograd authorities; he also advocated, right up to the retreat in 1915, war aims which visualised the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary and the creation of a series of Slavonic states. The abnormal expansion of the Russian zone of influence right to the very frontiers of Bavaria and past the Balkan frontiers that this would entail, was not at all to the liking of the Western Powers.

The Grandduke, however, was not just then in great favour with the Czar's political entourage, and consequently Russia's official war-aims were definitely concentrated on the annexation of Constantinople, while it was settled that all their military resources should be focussed on the conquest of Galicia.

By the middle of September Russia's forces were adequate to cope with not only her casualties in Galicia, but also in Eastern Prussia, and it was decided to rearrange the distribution of the armies on the different fronts. The main purpose of the original plan of campaign, which was to concentrate the nation's energies first upon a knock-out blow at Austria-Hungary, had apparently been successful, despite the rather haphazard manner in which the forces had at the outset been despatched to the war zones. Nevertheless, there had been no definite victory—no utter rout of the enemy's armies. For this the Grandduke's deployment scheme, undertaken absolutely on his own initiative, his injudicious distribution of the troops and his indefiniteness of purpose had been mainly responsible. The distribution of the troops was inspired by the Grandduke's bias towards France, and the indefiniteness of purpose was the reaction of his own temperamental indecision.

Through a quixotic sense of duty towards his western ally, and also for strong personal sentimental reasons, the Grandduke's new plan of campaign was almost exclusively inspired by the alarming reports (incidentally baseless reports) which the French Government despatched to Russia despite the fact that the Battle of the Marne was over. The nightmare of the German army brooded over Paris like an incubus. Frenchmen were obsessed with a dread that the ignominious tragedy of the Franco-Prussian War might be re-enacted. All the information that the Grandduke received from Paris was permeated with this panicky preoccupation, and it was because Nicholas with a mistaken sense of chivalry kept his eyes focussed on his beloved France, that despite the urgent appeal of General Ivanov, the Russian general on the Austro-Hungarian front, the campaign there was not followed up resolutely after the lull. Like the other commanders in the early stages of the war, Nicholas also



Imperial War Museum

GENERAL BRUSILOV

overrated the importance of successes already attained, and thought that he had practically settled accounts with Austria-Hungary. Instead of exploiting to the uttermost the advantages he had already attained, instead of thwarting all efforts at a reorganisation of the routed enemy, and instead of pushing ahead with unremitting ruthlessness right through Hungary and Moldavia, he gave the demoralised Austro-Hungarian army ample scope for the regrouping of forces and the restoration of *morale*, and made arrangements for an alignment of troops on a large scale for an advance against Breslau and Posen.

The enormous reserve forces drafted from Siberia which the Grandduke had at his disposal, were assigned to the support of the offensive army. Valuable weeks were frittered away in exhausting marches and tedious delays. Belated news arrived of the advance of an entire German army from East Prussia to Silesia, simultaneously with an utter lack of contact and absolute ignorance of the movements of the Austro-Hungarian enemy. The upshot was that the advancing armies of the Central Powers came bang up against the Russians while they were still in the throes of realignment. Taken utterly by surprise, the Russians fell back behind the Vistula and the San. The advance of the Austro-Hungarian army, which he had by this time regarded as virtually extinct, completely upset the Grandduke's apple-cart. He suddenly found that he had to cope anew with the problem of the two enemy forces. But at all costs Nicholas decided that he would not be side-tracked from his plan of campaign against Germany's forces. The new alignment was carried out successfully and expeditiously along the two river lines. The sheer momentum of the Russian massed troops won the day. Once the dangers attendant on the river defences had passed Nicholas marshalled his forces for the Warsaw storm armies. The dogged defence of the Russians won the day; their lines held out unflinchingly until the Warsaw offensive was launched and forced the enemy to desist from his outflanking tactics and to fall back. Nicholas had scored a definite victory.

The Grandduke at the outset had substituted for his

plan of campaign against Austria-Hungary a deployment against Germany, then after Tannenberg and the initial Austro-Hungarian successes, switched on to Galicia again, and after the second Lemberg battle, wheeled round against the Germans once more. And now there followed a fresh alignment—a compromise between the two objectives of fighting against Austria-Hungary and against Germany. Both schemes had their respective partisans at headquarters, and, of course, the compromise only partly solved both problems. Eight corps were allotted for the campaign against East Prussia, fourteen were to cope with Austria-Hungary, an objective held as of only secondary importance, while only eleven, i.e. one-third of the entire available forces, were available for the "march to Germany." It was a pitiful result after the colossal preparations and was solely attributable to the indecision of the Grandduke. In pursuance of his scheme of "compromise," he decided to strike simultaneously at Germany and Austria-Hungary. The Russian forces, the bulk of whom were massed along the middle reaches of the Vistula, moved towards Posen and Breslau, but in a south-westerly direction in the rear of the retreating enemy, towards Breslau and Cracow. The intention was to overwhelm the main Austro-German forces which had converged on those two cities. The Russian offensive forces were apparently of overwhelming strength, and Paris waxed hysterical with glee as it visualised the irresistible onward lumbering of the "steam roller." The Grandduke himself too saw everything in roseate hues, and, as he swung onward with his invincible host, his heart beat time to the refrain of "The Marseillaise," which was ringing in his excited brain.

But the enemy had vanished from Breslau and Cracow, where he was supposed to be. The Russian army was rolling slowly onward, when it was suddenly attacked on its northern flank by the Germans. Thanks to the reckless valour of the onset of the Germans and their inferiority in strength, their offensive wing was cut off and was itself enveloped. Nicholas himself took part in the fight and eagerly looked forward to paying off the Tannenberg score, but failed in his objective owing to the

inertia of the same subordinate, who had been partially responsible for the disaster in East Prussia. A typical illustration of the Grandduke's weakness is seen in the fact that after that disaster he not only failed to secure the dismissal of the said subordinate who was a *persona grata* in Petrograd, but he had to move heaven and earth to prevent his being promoted. But now at last, after a third serious blunder, the favourite of Petrograd was relieved of office.

The southern flank of the Russian army had better luck than the northern one. The upshot of all the manœuvring and fighting, however, was that eventually the campaign fizzled down into the inevitable warfare of positions. - The dream of the triumphal entry of the Cossacks into Vienna and Berlin was over.

With the falling-back of the Polish battle-front which was hard pressed on both wings, the Grandduke's hopes had vanished. He found that he had quite enough to do in warding off from Warsaw the reinforcements of the Germans that were pressing onward from the west, and it was solely due to his extraordinary energy that his entire front was not hurled back to that fortress. By dogged, reckless pertinacity he succeeded in holding up the onset of the Germans.

The plan of offensives against East Prussia, Posen and Silesia, had petered out, mainly through the Grandduke's own fault. The perfectly sound original idea of the annihilation of the Austro-Hungarian army had been given up in favour of all kinds of schemes, both wild-cat and feasible. It was now too late to reconsider his position. The German army had been considerably reinforced, and mere defensive action against it was a formidable task. The fight here, too, began to stagnate into the warfare of positions, and it would have been an Herculean task, indeed, to ginger up the now inert Russian forces to an offensive. And so the winter of 1915 found Nicholas without any definite plans for the future, and without the wherewithal to execute them, even if he had any. The exhausted Russian army settled down to its brumal sleep.

At length the Grandduke adopted new schemes which did not meet the approval of his subordinates in command

of the Austro-Hungarian front. In the west the Champagne battle commenced. Galicia had been conquered, and by its conquest one definite war objective had been realised. The East Prussian bastion stood intact against Russia. His failure in that region exasperated and humiliated the Grandduke. He yearned to break the spell that protected East Prussia against his onslaughts. And then came the second battle of the Masurian Lakes, which dealt a staggering blow to the Russian army.

Now that the Russian leader had been again taken by surprise by the Germans and his army routed, his thoughts turned to Austria-Hungary once more. The moment seemed favourable for an offensive there. The Austro-Hungarian army was exhausted from its costly and futile battle in the snow-clad Carpathians. A counter-attack, if successful, might, the Grandduke calculated, have important political reactions both on Italy and Roumania. But apart from these considerations, he became now thoroughly convinced that, once the Dual Monarchy was crippled, it would be a simple matter to squeeze Germany to death by simultaneous pressure from the east and the west.

The fall of Przemysl, the visit of the Czar to Galicia which, much to the annoyance of the Grandduke, was like a triumphal taking over of possession of that country, the virtual collapse of the Austro-Hungarian front in the Carpathians, Italy's haggling about her entry into the war, the imminent attack on the Dardanelles, the promised gift of Constantinople to Russia by the Western Powers—all these events marked the opening of a new phase of the war. Nevertheless, despite this gift of a city the capture of which was as yet highly hypothetical, and despite the possibility of greatly improved facilities for getting food supplies and ammunition for his army once the passage of the Dardanelles was forced, the Grandduke contemplated the approaching offensive with mixed feelings. It seemed to him very questionable whether Great Britain, once she had got possession of the Golden Horn, would really pass it on to the Russians.

It was only with the greatest difficulty that the troops needed for the Carpathian offensive could be obtained from General Alexejev, the new commander of the army

group that was fighting against Germany. Each of the two army groups was absolutely independent of the other, with the result that the transfer of troops from one to the other involved a considerable amount of trouble. It was not until August, 1915, that the Grandduke could pluck up sufficient courage to create a third army group, and thereby reduce the power of the two commanders.

Furthermore, Nicholas could not see eye to eye with the commander of the army group that was engaged against Austria-Hungary with regard to the location of the offensive. At this juncture Nicholas presented a pathetic picture of utter weakness. The result was that the reinforcements that he himself had marshalled, were despatched to the Eastern Carpathians, while his subordinate, Ivanov, launched all the forces in his own region against the Western Carpathians. One evil effect of this lack of cohesion, apart altogether from the fact that it frittered away the strength of the troops, was that the front lines in Western Galicia and Southern Poland were reduced to a menacingly weak position. Nevertheless, it looked as if the offensive would be successful. The Grandduke was already negotiating with the Italians and Serbians about co-ordinated undertakings, and declined to give any troops for the Dardanelles, or for the west or for the Balkans, in order to attain the goal that was within his reach. And yet eventually all his efforts were in vain. The Austro-Hungarian army wavered, it is true, but it did not collapse. Slender German reinforcements turned the balance. In the snow-covered wintry fields and in the ooze and mud of the spring thaw, which seriously hampered the movements of artillery, the Russian troops met with steadily increasing casualties. The Grandduke paid as little heed to the warning with regard to his unprotected front line as he did to the warnings about exposing his forces to an undue strain. Despite dreadful losses Ivanov again and again made fresh offensives. The despotic nature of the Grandduke asserted itself in his ruthless determination to win a victory, cost what it might. He had once more become an Asiatic. He shrank not from the sight of rivers of blood. He firmly believed that he could wring from fate a decision in his favour.

And then came the Gorlice blow. The weak spot in Eastern Galicia was attacked, and the Russians were once more completely surprised by the measures adopted by their opponents. The lines which had been with utter lack of foresight reduced in strength, collapsed and retreated. The Gorlice blow quickly evolved into a catastrophe. A few days later the Carpathian front gave ground. The mountains and defiles that had been captured in the course of heavy fighting that lasted for months, were lost without a blow being struck to save them. The terrible sacrifices made for them had all been in vain. The whole scheme of things seemed to be meaningless and purposeless. Even the stoical Russian soldier lost his poise. The Grandduke's belated effort to subdue Austria-Hungary had proved too much for him, and the Russian army was utterly exhausted after all the hardships it had undergone. This exhaustion reached its climax with the Gorlice disaster. The enormous number of prisoners captured daily during the retreat showed how complete, how apparently irretrievable, was the disaster.

Nicholas was at first almost dazed by the terrible turn that things had taken. His scanty reserve forces had to fall back, engulfed in the eddy of retreating troops. It was only when Przemysl was again lost and the San was reached, that his plans and instructions began to assume something like a cohesive system once more. At length he decided to defend the San line after the fate of Przemysl had been decided by the enemy. The Grandduke hoped that he would get sufficient time at the San to prepare a counter-offensive. He gave the Russian armies on the Dneister instructions for a vigorous offensive. But that region was too remote to produce any results worth considering.

The enemy was already pressing their offensive across the San, when the Russians made counter-maneuvres by resuming their attacks against the part of the front line that had been held by the weaker foes, the Austro-Hungarians. These tactics, however, only led to transient successes at a few points. The armies of the Central Powers were slowly but definitely gaining ground.

The reaction of the unexpected, terrible defeat was promptly apparent among the civilian population of

Russia. There were serious disturbances in Moscow, which took the guise, not merely of hostility to Germany, but of hostility to everything foreign in general. The people refused any longer to see any reason for the war, which, as they now firmly believed, was being waged solely in the interests of foreigners. They probably could never quite grasp the reason why Russia should help France and Serbia. The symptoms of the Moscow disturbances were ominously like those that occurred during the revolutionary trouble following the Russo-Japanese War.

At an imperial council which was held at headquarters, the Grandduke advocated internal reforms as he had previously done in 1905. The upshot was a partial reshuffling of ministers, after which things slumped back into the old groove ; in fact, they got worse, if anything. The Grandduke drew on himself afresh the enmity of all the reactionaries, including the Czarina. Their enmity contributed in no small degree to his downfall. Another contributing factor was the fact that the defeat in the field and the disturbances at home did not in the slightest degree impair his popularity with the soldiers. They laid the blame for Russia's disasters not on him, but on the accursed "system."

Shortly after the findings of the council were made known, the position at the front began to go from bad to worse. A regular panic ensued in Riga when the Germans pushed forward into Courland. The troops who were sent to meet them gave way to the east of Warsaw before the German offensive. And when in the middle of July the front was partially held against the enemy storm troops that poured out of Galicia, even this partial success was only attained at the expense of the other army units, which broke before the onset of the attackers. The Russians were no longer superior in their infantry numbers to the Austro-Germans, while their artillery was decidedly inferior to that of the Germans. Considering this factor, taken in conjunction with the shortage of ammunition, as well as the terrible overthrow which the Russian army had undergone, it was no easy job for the Grandduke to make good his retreat from the Polish front salient without excessive losses. It was a new angle of his Asiatic

outlook when blazing villages and endless lines of natives who were forced to accompany them marked the retreat of the Russians with a view to handicapping their pursuers. They were too short of explosive material to destroy the roads as they fell back. In all other respects, however, Nicholas showed great courage and ingenuity in carrying out his rearguard movement.

Towards the end of August the Czar himself took over the Grandduke's command, and Nicholas was appointed to the Caucasus front. By pushing forward his front line systematically with an occasional sharp engagement with the Turks, he gained a series of victories and eventually established contact with the British in Persia. This quaint theatre of war with its mountain peaks soaring heavenwards and its limitless steppes and its guerilla battles, was just an ideal zone for the Grandduke. Here as an Asiatic viceroy and commander-in-chief, he was able to find scope for his great gifts, and was no longer pre-occupied with a nostalgia for France. And here too early in 1917 the Russian army crumbled to pieces.

At the beginning of the Revolution the Grandduke, as well as all the other higher Russian generals, advised the Czar to abdicate. He was again appointed by the Czar as commander-in-chief, with the cordial approval of the other generals, but he never took up office again.

The Grandduke died one year after the end of the war in the France that he loved so well. He will always be remembered as a man who undertook more than he could carry out. His clear mental vision enabled him to realise the malady from which Russia was suffering and the evils of the Czarist system, but especially of the shortcomings of the last ill-fated imperial couple.

ALEXEJEV—THE “RED-TAPE” GENERAL

THE character of the Grandduke, with its many paradoxical features, and that of his successor, General Alexejev, show how the greatest contrasts exist side by side in Russia—that land whose natives have so many Asiatic traits of temperament. Whimsical court influences made it almost impossible for aristocratic generals to be shifted from their posts after they had been guilty of blazing indiscretions and blunders, and owing to the self-same caprices also, it was possible for a man of bourgeois or even lowly origin to attain to the highest military rank, even without any powerful patronage being exercised on his behalf.

Rather below middle height, and with a decided droop in his shoulders, Alexejev was just a slightly neurotic, bespectacled professor who had only served his military apprenticeship in headquarters secretariats. He had never commanded a regiment or a division, and consequently before taking up supreme command, he had not been in touch with the grim actualities of the life of the soldiers. He was a typical specimen of the competent, but narrow-minded and unimaginative “brass-hat,” the good old pedantic supernumerary and military specialist that knew everything about strategy and tactics—but only theoretically, of course. Conscientiously absorbed in his routine tasks, always up to his ears in work, with sheaves of official documents around him, rather unsociable and reserved—such was Alexejev, the born bureaucrat.

At the beginning of the war, although he was fifty-seven years old, he was promoted to the rank of chief of staff of the army group that took the field against Austria-Hungary. In this very congenial job he rendered excellent service. The rôle he played in military decisions was much more definite and important than is usual with chiefs of staff, despite the fact that he was not a *persona*

grata with General Ivanov, the commander-in-chief of the army group. Incidentally, Ivanov himself belonged to the class of generals who rose from the ranks, of whom there were quite a considerable number in the Russian army. Unfortunately, Ivanov had not the requisite energy to carry out in detail the plans of campaign which had been cunningly devised for him by his chief of staff.

This kink in Ivanov's character explains the lack of finality in the case of the two big battles of Lemberg. Even with the inadequate forces at his disposal a more practical commander could easily have had far better results. The spell of idleness that followed the battle led just to an indefinite shelving of the initial plan of campaign, and then to an attitude of no longer regarding Austria-Hungary as their main opponent. Ivanov could not even make up his mind about the immediate vital question of the offensive against Przemysl. Valuable time was lost, and when at last an attack was definitely launched without any artillery preparation, it was too late. Before the walls of the fortress the Russians were mowed down in swathes. It was a foretaste of the terrible sacrifices suffered by the Russian army in the battles in the Carpathians in 1915 and 1916.

In vain did Alexejev strive after the close of the period of rest allowed to the troops to ginger up the Grandduke to follow up his successes against the Austro-Hungarian army. The opportune moment was allowed to slip by, never to recur. The army was ordered to deploy against Germany. Alexejev's view as expressed by him later in his memoirs, that one enemy should have first been put completely out of action before proceeding against Germany, was theoretically quite correct, but it was now too late to put it in execution.

Alexejev decided that the tedious journey that had to be undertaken in preparation for the new "job" against Germany must be carried out along the western banks of the San and the Vistula, inasmuch as, on paper anyhow, Austria-Hungary was beaten, while the Germans were far away in East Prussia. But there was awaiting for the Russian army the double surprise of the advances both of the Austro-Hungarians who were considered to be wiped out and of a sudden German offensive.

Alexejev had his hands full in carrying out the complicated deployment of his men along the middle reaches of the Vistula simultaneously with the defence of that river and of the San front ; yet he executed his intricate task efficiently. The sudden onslaught of the Austro-Hungarians along the San was only a partial surprise for him ; he half anticipated it, and he knew now that he had been correct in his contention that the victory over the forces of the Danube monarchy should have been driven home. Alexejev gave Brussilov, the commander of the armies in Galicia, a free hand to arrange for a retreat when things were in this exasperatingly chaotic state. And the retreat was likely to frustrate all the plans against Germany, as a matter of course. Indeed it was solely owing to the determination of the Grandduke and Brussilov that things did not come to such a sorry pass. Alexejev had, however, gained such a brilliant reputation both on account of his specialised knowledge of his work and on account of his insistence that the offensive against Austria-Hungary should have been followed up—a view which events had only too clearly vindicated, and also on account of the great part he had played in the success of the Lemberg battles, that the Grandduke was anxious to make him his chief of staff. Ivanov's opposition frustrated his intention. A curious feature of the Great War was that nine-tenths of the highest positions in the Russian army were held by generals who had stood the test on the Austro-Hungarian front. There were victories galore ; but, unfortunately, they were never followed up properly by the men who won them.

On another occasion towards the end of December, the bureaucratic kink in Alexejev asserted itself. He suddenly warned Brussilov, who had plunged deep into the Western Carpathians, to halt, as he had observed by his maps and charts that his lines of communication seemed to be menaced at that spot where the army had received its last blow from the enemy. And now Alexejev had the time of his life with his specialisation. He tried in vain to persuade the Grandduke to make an advance along the whole front against Austria-Hungary. The Grandduke had made up his mind, however, to attack East Prussia. The result was that Alexejev had to beat back

with the slender forces at his disposal the onset of the Austro-Hungarians whose forces in the Carpathians were reinforced by some three or four German divisions. And just as in the case of the defence of the Vistula in October, 1914, he succeeded also in this task by sheer assiduity and doggedness. He sent forward division after division from Poland into the Carpathians. Even though heavy sacrifices were incurred in the process, both himself and the Russian army performed wonders in the defence put up against the Austro-Hungarian offensives. The Carpathian engagements were one long epic saga in which all the participating troops were heroes. And when at length Przemysl fell, and the onsets of the Austro-Hungarian army fizzled out, Alexejev was appointed commander of the army group that was operating against the Germans.

Just at this period the Grandduke, scared by the second battle of the Masurian Lakes, had now made up his mind to transfer the weight of his offensive against Austria-Hungary and to make a drive through the Carpathians on his own account. But Alexejev, like his immediate predecessor, Ivanov, had by this time substantially changed his point of view, owing to the bitter lesson which the terrible casualties in Austria-Hungary had taught him. He found the plains of East Prussia and Poland a soothing change from the gorges and crags of the Carpathians. He thought that it would be easier to score a victory there. So here now was Alexejev, hitherto the most enthusiastic supporter of an offensive against Austria-Hungary, devoting all his energies towards a campaign against Germany as soon as he got supreme command. His calculation, however, did not seem quite a logical one, on account of the inferior artillery and technical equipment of the Russians, to say nothing of the unquestionable fear in which the Russians held the Germans.

The peace that prevailed on Alexejev's new front was hardly broken during the first few months of his command. Nevertheless, he was very reluctant about giving reinforcements for the Carpathian campaigns against which he had taken such an aversion. Moreover, the first thrust of the Germans against Courland seemed to him to be of

little significance. It was only towards the middle of July that they assumed menacing proportions, and the Riga-Petrograd "front" became henceforth a constant obsession at Russian headquarters. Alexejev, however, succeeded in fortifying a bridge-head at Riga, although he had simultaneously to undertake the defence of the Narew line with his forces, which had been considerably weakened owing to the drafts sent to Galicia. In this region, just as previously in the Carpathian defensive, where no strategic ingenuity was called for, but just tactical defence against the enemy, he was completely successful. Systematic work and organising ability were the salient features of this red-tapist general. Dexterously and cautiously he kept up a stubborn defence and evaded the menace of entanglement in the Warsaw fortress system. He was powerless, however, to counter the fact that between the defenders of Riga and his own north wing there was a yawning gap, where dangers he was only too well aware of, lurked. But the Grandduke definitely forbade him, even after the fall of the fortresses of Kovno and Grodno, to withdraw on his right wing unless forced to do so. It was destined to be the last command that Alexejev received from him.

At the end of August, the Czar, in deference to the pressure brought to bear on him by the Czarina, decided to take over supreme command himself. This weak prince was prevailed upon to adopt this step partly through fear of the rivalry of his uncle, but mainly through a mystic idea that the tenure of the office of commander-in-chief by him, the anointed of God, would, so to speak, force fate to give victory to the Russian flag. The earnest warnings of almost all high-placed officials were of no avail against this religious obsession. The Czar was, of course, bound to exercise a great influence on the *morale* of the soldiers on account of the aura of religious mysticism that he radiated, but in every other respect, owing to his vague and rather weak personality, he was scarcely the man for the task he had undertaken. And an even more unhappy selection was the appointment of Alexejev as chief of staff. Virtually it meant that Alexejev had to carry out all the actual duties of the commander-in-chief, a rôle for which his red-tapism utterly unfitted him,

especially when he had to deal with the weak Czar. Alexejev's unobtrusive taciturnity rather appealed to the Czar, who probably also thought it a good idea to have at the head of the army someone sprung from the rank and file of the people, someone in touch with the people, someone whose profound theoretical knowledge and efficiency inspired confidence in all ranks. He managed to hide two grave limitations from his royal master—indcision and weakness of character. Furthermore, as Alexejev had not the imposing figure and appearance that had made the Grandduke so popular, the Czar felt that he himself would henceforth be very much in the lime-light. There would be no outstanding General to eclipse him.

When Alexejev took up his high office on September 1st, 1915, the Russian army had yet to encounter the final menace attendant on its rearguard movement. Alexejev dealt with it in masterful style. Both the German enveloping manœuvre in the rift between Riga and Wilna and the Austro-Hungarian effort to take advantage of the second great gap in the Russian front, to the south of the Pripet marshes, were in vain. After a few weeks the front became stabilised, and the Russian army had the chance of recuperating during the winter spell of quiet which lasted for months from the unnerving effects of the intensive heavy fighting which had continued almost without a break for a year. These protracted battles made the Russian campaign of 1914-15 differ essentially from all other contests during the Great War. On no other front was there a battle which went on so persistently for a whole year, taxing the nation's utmost military resources, eternally blazing up afresh at different points, and literally eating up the huge drafts of reserves that were steadily sent forward to keep it going. Both sides were exhausted after this year of persistent butchery. The Germans suffered least in this prolonged agony, as only a very small portion of their army fought in the east. Moreover, they were far better equipped with the most up-to-date mechanised appliances of modern warfare than either their opponents or their own allies were. And then their initial successes had given the Germans a tremendous moral fillip. On the other hand, the Russians never

quite recovered from the blows they received in 1914 and 1915.

Nevertheless, Alexejev succeeded by hard-slogging routine red-tapism not only in substantially increasing the number of big guns and in providing abundance of munitions, and in creating new fighting units, but also in stimulating the spirits and the *morale* of the soldiers. But when it came to a question of a new plan of campaign, he was absolutely bankrupt in strategic initiative. The offensives which he planned towards autumn were inspired by political motives. First there was one on the extreme southern wing, on the Roumanian frontier, which was started with the hope of getting the support of that nation as the result of a victorious coup. In connection with this enterprise Alexejev gave orders to all the fighting armies to take a complete rest, as he wished to hold them in reserve. The immediate result was, however, that he afforded the enemy an excellent opportunity for piling up his own reserves.

The second offensive was made at Riga in order to put an end to the constant menace overhanging this town, which was rather too near to Petrograd, as Russians visualised distance. Both enterprises failed, and two scapegoats were immediately found. One of the commanders who were sent home, was General Ivanov, his own immediate predecessor, the other general was replaced by Kuropatkin, who had been so extremely unlucky in the Russo-Japanese War. The general who had been in charge of the army that was defeated at Gorlice, was also given a command once more. There was a striking analogy between this bit of re-shuffling and what occurred later in the Austro-Hungarian army, when Arz and the Emperor Charles, likewise inspired by a whimsical blend of good-nature and rancour, showed a tendency to reappoint commanders whom Conrad had relieved of office. The successor to Ivanov was, however, Brussilov, the famous cavalry general, who, despite Alexejev's pin-pricks, was soon destined to have the greatest influence on the trend of things.

Taking all in all, it must be said that the failure of these two offensives undertaken with limited resources and relatively minor objectives was not regarded very

seriously at Russian headquarters. But now before Alexejev had decided upon any new phase of activity, circumstances placed tasks in his way—tasks for which his red-tapist bias fitted him exactly. Once more the French sent out an urgent appeal for help. And now that appeal, to which the Grandduke would, through personal predilection, have enthusiastically responded, was answered merely through Alexejev's lack of any definite policy. Perhaps also the Czar, who no doubt had got hold of the rumours that were current about the alleged partiality of the Czarina and himself towards the Germans, was rather afraid to turn a deaf ear to the very first S.O.S. sent direct to himself by France. Alexejev replied to the appeal by preparing for a great offensive against the German front. He piled up enormous supplies of munitions, with the intention of blasting his way through the German lines by the sheer volume of high explosives, after which he would make a drive for Wilna and roll up the entire front as far as the Baltic. Every detail of the plan of attack was accurately arranged, but there was one grave miscalculation. The place selected for the offensive was dry firm ground as visualised by Alexejev's scheme drawn up on paper, but at the precise moment selected for the start of operations the big thaw started, and the whole neighbourhood became one huge impassable quagmire, which very seriously hampered the manœuvring of artillery. It was in vain that Brussilov appealed for an offensive against the much weaker Austro-Hungarian front, where also the facilities for deployment were infinitely more favourable. Alexejev's answer was that the Germans were making a mighty offensive at Verdun ; *ergo*, the Germans in the east must be forthwith attacked, and at the spot too which the map showed to be very dry and firm. It was rather unfortunate that it should have become a swamp just when the attack started. Alexejev had completely left out of account the phenomenon of melting snow. The offensive utterly collapsed, and it had not the effect of drawing even one German division away from the Western Front. Tens of thousands of Russians were sacrificed in vain for Verdun.

After the failure of this great effort to relieve the pressure on the Western Front, Alexejev planned a



Imperial War Museum

GENERAL SIR HENRY WILSON

second and even more ambitious offensive against another sector of the German front. His thrust was timed for the middle of May. Brussilov, who was in charge of the armies operating against Austria-Hungary, had been protesting very vehemently against the recent enforced inactivity of his troops, in accordance with Alexejev's orders, and he decided that, as Alexejev would not adopt his suggestion of directing the main offensive against the weaker opponent, he would himself venture on subsidiary offensives along as extended a front as possible. He felt that by remaining inactive he was giving the enemy the chance of taking the initiative. When Alexejev pointed out to him that he could not count on any support whatsoever, he undertook to carry out his enterprises with the unsupported slender resources of his own exhausted front. Alexejev gave way to his persistent pleading, as he invariably yielded to any external pressure, if kept up long enough. In the midst of the preparations for the new offensive against the Germans, and when the upshot of the Verdun battle was a foregone conclusion, another appeal for help reached Russian headquarters. On this occasion it was from Italy, whose King had sent a personal telegram to the Czar. Towards the end of May, 1916, Austria-Hungary had started an offensive from the Tyrol, which assumed very menacing proportions. Forthwith Alexejev asked Brussilov whether he could do anything, and even suggested to him to start his projected subsidiary offensive along a wide front eight days earlier than the date already fixed for it. Brussilov gladly consented. For weeks—nay for months, he had economised every ounce of lead. The troops were thoroughly trained and had had a good spell of rest. Everything was in readiness for the offensive. The subsidiary attack which had originally been suggested, much against the wish of Alexejev, commenced—it turned out to be the greatest victory that Russia's army gained in the course of the war, and indeed it will be recorded in history as one of the greatest triumphs gained on any front during that colossal contest.

Alexejev was quite as surprised as Conrad was himself on the other side, at the wonderful results attained. The

number of prisoners mounted by tens of thousands. The Austro-Hungarian troops were seized with panic, and an enormous tract of territory was won. The situation demanded from Alexejev a very bold and, above all, a very speedy decision. But like Arz later on, and like Hindenburg and Ludendorff in Italy in October, 1917, Alexejev was unable in June, 1916, to cope with the magnitude of the victory. Valuable time was wasted in debating whether they should proceed with the great offensive which had been planned against the Germans for the middle of June, and for which preparations were proceeding rapidly, or whether they should start it at once even though not quite ready for it, or finally, whether it would not be better to divert all their accumulations of reserve forces to the field of victory. The last-named scheme would no doubt have been by far the best, if railway communications had permitted it. And then the *via media* was suggested of making use, as far as possible, of the limited railway facilities available, while starting right away with the troops who were left, and who were of fairly considerable numbers, the offensive for which preparations were under way. The Germans, Alexejev insisted, must at all costs be prevented from coming to the aid of their ally. But finally yet another way out occurred to Alexejev after a lot of time had been lost in trying to make up his mind. Once more he allowed himself to be guided by events. At the eleventh hour he came to the decision to liberate reserves from his own offensive forces, which had been marshalled so magnificently on paper, after which he shelved his plan when it was almost matured, and changed his idea about the point of attack. The fact that at the very spot which he had selected as the objective for his new offensive, two Austro-Hungarian divisions had taken their post on the German front accounted for this alteration in his plan. Prolonged and elaborate deployment manœuvres were undertaken, and meanwhile the Germans got plenty of time to fill up the gaps in the lines facing Brussilov.

In the conduct of the battle on the Austro-Hungarian front Alexejev was most unfortunate with his offensive tactics. Even Brussilov himself was not equal to the task. Again and again assaults were made against the

enemy's strongest positions, instead of concentrating on his weak spot, i.e. the big gaps that had been caused by his excessive losses. On this point too Alexejev's red-tape obsessions outweighed all strategic considerations as he attacked at the very spot where the enemy was most active.

But in spite of everything the success of the Brussilov offensive, mainly owing to the complete collapse of the Austro-Hungarian troops at certain sections, was overwhelming. The number of prisoners was colossal, and a considerable extent of ground had been taken. In these days of jubilant triumph for the Allies, when the Italians took Gorizia, when Verdun was saved, and when the Battle of the Somme started, the negotiations with Roumania had also assumed a new phase. There can be no doubt whatsoever that Roumania was only very lukewarmly supported by Russia, as the latter thought that she could do very well without her greedy ally and keep all the war booty for herself.

In the beginning of July, and later on more markedly in August, the resistance of the enemy considerably stiffened. The Austro-Hungarian troops, substantially supported by the Germans, were imbued with fresh vigour and courage. Their lines became visibly stronger and firmer. It was too late for Alexejev and Brussilov to seek for a solution to their difficulties by operations against exhausted Austria-Hungary. To begin with, Austria-Hungary's period of utter exhaustion had passed, and, moreover, she was now supported by Germany.

Had Alexejev unhesitatingly decided in June to follow up Brussilov's victory by bringing up reserves at once and simultaneously attacking the Germans with vigour, and had he also given the Czar the cue that the moment had come for closing the ring by backing up Roumania, it is not quite clear what course events would have taken. But Alexejev with his red-tape methods once more let a great opportunity slip.

It is significant that the only two really bright prospects of victory for the Allies previous to the summer of 1918 appeared on the Eastern Front, and that these prospects were in connection with the offensives against the Austro-Hungarian army.

Like almost all the other commanders during the course of the Great War, like Falkenhayn at Verdun, like Conrad among the Carpathians, like Nicholas in his subsequent counter-offensives, like Foch in his abortive schemes for following up the Battle of the Somme, and like Haig in Flanders—Alexejev, too, tried to make up for the mistakes he had committed by pig-headed doggedness, and to secure victory by reckless waste of his soldiers' lives. But his efforts were all in vain, and led to the permanent enfeeblement of his own forces. The Russian divisions dashed again and again with irresistible fury against the ranks of the Austro-Hungarian army, which was strongly supported by the Germans. The Russian offensive was at its very fiercest, when Roumania found herself in a very perilous plight. Following the advice of French military experts, Roumania had entered the war with a somewhat ill-conceived plan of campaign. Later on, in rather panicky and haphazard engagements, she had swung her armies now to this front, now to that front in the futile effort to ward off the series of attacks made upon her. Alexejev was only able to give her slender help which arrived too late.

Shortly before this, the great Russian offensive, after running into several months of persistent bloodshed, came to an end through sheer exhaustion and the advent of winter. The casualties, even according to Russian conceptions, were appalling and far exceeded those of any other individual offensive on any front during the Great War. Of course they were losses that Alexejev could make good on paper, but his red-tapism could not alter the undoubted fact that the *morale* and stamina of the Russian army, its will and its ability to face the eternal blood-letting, were hopelessly undermined. The Brussilov offensive which had begun so hopefully, really gave its death-blow to the Russian army at the finish. The official reports of the generals were among the numerous portents that the end was near, when in December, 1916, the rifles literally dropped from the weary hands of the soldiers. The dreadful losses had caused angry protests in every corner of that mighty empire which was not over-sensitive about wastage of human life—protests which were warnings of an epoch-making crisis. And the

internal discontent, which was accentuated by shortage of food and commodities generally, reached its culmination with the realisation of the terrific sacrifices the army endured under the leadership of the Czar.

Hindenburg's comment in his memoirs written after the war on the holocausts of the Brussilov offensive is significant: "Brussilov was swept from his lofty post by the deluge of blood of his own countrymen which had been poured in torrents in Galicia and Wolhynia in 1916, just as Nivelle had been swept away in the spring of that year in France. Even in Russia, with her apparently limitless resources in man-power, the authorities seem to have become sensitive about the colossal holocausts of soldiers. The page on which Russia's casualties was written, has disappeared from the great war-ledger. Nobody knows the figures. They may have run to five or eight millions. All we know is that sometimes in our battles with the Russians, we had to shift the mounds of enemy corpses that had piled up in front of our trenches so as to have a clear field of fire against the fresh onrushing waves of attackers. Our imagination may conjure up an approximate calculation of their losses, but the actual figures will now never be known."

Amid the echoes of the subterranean rumblings of the impending revolution Alexejev yet once more gave proof of his undoubted genius as a red-tapist. During the winter of 1916 and the spring of 1917, the Russian army underwent a sweeping internal reorganisation. By lessening the number of battalions in each division, new divisions were formed from the superfluous battalions. Thereby the number of fighting units in the Russian army reached a figure far above that of all the other belligerent nations. It was a splendid achievement when one considers the shortage of munitions and the growing dearth of efficient officers in the Russian army.

The discontent which had been seething for a long time among the Russian masses, boiled over after the assassination of Rasputin. Seditious babblings had merged into demonstrations against the Government and against the Czar himself, as well as open acts of violence and sabotage which from day to day assumed more and more menacing forms, particularly in Petrograd and the other big cities.

On March 13th, the Czar, at the suggestion of Alexejev, sent General Ivanov as a kind of dictator to the capital. A few hours later the Czar himself was preparing to hurry to Petrograd. Alexejev, however, who was in close touch with the chrysalis revolutionary overlords in that city, changed his view completely about the appointment of Ivanov exactly twenty-four hours after it had been made. His changed attitude was the direct result of the opposition of the heads of the Duma. The latter objected to dictatorship in any form, but especially the dictatorship of Ivanov, whom they regarded as a reactionary. Alexejev, who was wavering between the idea of a military dictatorship, red-tapism and his own genuine personal prejudices in favour of the rights of the people, was driven by the sheer momentum of quickly moving events rather than through conviction, to the view that only the abdication of the Czar could assuage public feeling in Russia, and make the country capable of continuing the war in an efficient manner.

Swayed partly by the persuasive eloquence of the Petrograd agitators, but mainly by the terrible uncertainty of things generally, Alexejev made the most critical decision of his lifetime the day after the Czar's departure. He organised a sort of telegraphic referendum among the senior officers of the army to see whether they were in favour, as he was, of the abdication of the Czar. When he found there was a consensus of opinion on the point, he issued a written statement to that effect, with the signature of the officers appended. When Alexejev presented the document to the Czar, the latter decided at once to abdicate.

The revolutionary happenings which led to Alexejev's "statement," were followed by many other happenings even more revolutionary. The new potentate, Kerensky, partly through fear, and partly because he was impressed by the rôle which Alexejev had played in connection with the abdication of the Czar, allowed the red-tapist to continue in office as commander-in-chief. Alexejev was no match of course for Kerensky's overwhelming oratorical powers and his outstanding personality, and drifted along limply on the swirling flood of epoch-making events. All kinds of reshufflings were made in

the higher grades of the army in accordance with the whim of the politicians, and without Alexejev being consulted in the matter. He still stuck to his post, however. He did this partly in the hope that his presence at the head of the army might save it from going to pieces, and partly through a genuine sympathy with the ideals and ambitions of the new era which seemed so alluring—on paper anyhow and in the mouths of the orators. Eventually, however, in the beginning of June, 1917, the utter futility of his efforts to guide the destinies of the army began to dawn on him. And then when he suddenly showed symptoms of a little backbone in his attitude towards the Petrograd potentates, they looked for and found some trivial pretext to get rid of him. Brussilov succeeded him for a few weeks.

But later on in October, when Kerensky sought the support of the army to get rid of the Frankenstein of Bolshevism which he had himself fostered, Alexejev placed himself at his service in a spirit of utter altruism.

Alexejev was an excellent organiser and military expert, but he was utterly unsuited for the rôle of commander. He had a flair for drawing up statistics, for co-ordinating data, and drawing up agenda. He was the personification of red-tapism.

WILSON—THE DIPLOMAT

IT seems very extraordinary that the name of the British marshal, Sir Henry Wilson, was scarcely known among the Central Powers. And yet of all the higher English military officers he played the most decisive rôle in British diplomacy in its bearings on the World War.

An Irishman by birth, he combined all the salient characteristics of his race, especially a keen wit and boundless optimism with a charming personality. He was tall, an excellent sportsman and a brilliant conversationalist with a fund of good stories which he told with inimitable drollery. In addition to this he was a hard worker and an extremely competent administrator—in short the born diplomat and higher functionary. His record as a general in the field was, on the other hand, rather poor. The few months during which he commanded an army corps at the front ended with a tactical blunder. When he went on furlough later Lloyd George, who was then Minister of War, consoled him by telling him that it was a pity to waste his genius with the tedious round of the activities of stationary warfare. Sir Henry's promotion to the rank of marshal was a tribute to his clear and unerring estimate of the gigantic issues at stake in the war. He always kept its ultimate goal before his eyes. A favourite tag of his was: "The only thing worth talking of just now is the killing of the Boches."

At the age of fifty, before the outbreak of the war, he undertook in his capacity as Chief of the Military Operations Department of the British General Staff no less than seventeen trips to the Franco-Belgian frontier. An ingratiating Irishman, he got on far better with the French than the average frigid and formal English officer would. He was a personal friend of Foch since 1906. At that time the negotiations between the two armies regard-

ing conjoint action in case of war involved far more compromising pledges than the British Government was officially aware of when England was faced with the moral obligation of taking part in the World War. Official publications by the Foreign Office deal in detail with this issue, and it is clear from them that Wilson was one of those who were mainly responsible for the pledges referred to. And when in the early days of August, 1914, the question of England's entry into the war was in the balance, he made use of all his political influence and his diplomatic ingenuity in order to back up his French friends. In his zeal he even outstepped his own official capacity. On numerous occasions during the war he was applauded and feted by French officers of the highest rank and by ministers of the French Government as the one great man without whose influence England would never have taken part in the war. And this estimate of him was correct. His first great diplomatic success in connection with the World War was the part he played in gingering up the British Government to take a hand in the game. And it was exclusively due to his energetic intervention that the little English army was so promptly and without a hitch sent across to the battlefields.

He made one very grave miscalculation in his opposition to Kitchener's farseeing scheme to increase the English army from six to seventy divisions. Like many other English military experts, he firmly believed until the beginning of 1915 that the war would soon end with a smashing victory, and was disconsolate when the handful of trained men available were not sent to the front as reserves but were used as a foundation for the new air force. Kitchener was indeed the only one who at that momentous time saw things in their proper perspective, prophesied that the war would be of long duration, and took steps to bring his large army into being. But the higher military officers in England who had hitherto been accustomed just to colonial skirmishes, took a long time to adapt their mentality to the colossal scope and the mammoth armaments of the World War. When five German armies were marching through Belgium Wilson as second in command of the Headquarters Staff of the Western Front army, entered in his diary a protest against

the decision of the Cabinet to keep two of the available six English divisions at home to provide against possible attempts at an invasion of the country. He deliberately expressed the view that if these two divisions had not been detained in England, the fight against the Germans would have taken quite a different turn—and that too at a time when 200 divisions were engaged in battle !

When Kitchener and some of the Cabinet ministers dashed across to Paris shortly before the Battle of the Marne in order to stop the imminent collapse of France, Wilson was optimistic. He even maintained his breezy confidence when French utterly broke down, and was in favour of retreating behind the Seine. Wilson's optimism was shared by the majority of the senior English generals, who philosophically recalled the fact that at the beginning of the Boer War, England met with a series of reverses before she had marshalled all her resources for the conflict.¹ Full of confidence in England's power, Wilson expressed the view that the situation would improve much on the lines of the Boer War. But there was another reason for the optimism of Wilson and the English generals, i.e. the extreme narrowness of their military vision. Even in 1915 after the war had lasted for a full year, and the great offensive against Russia was at its zenith, Wilson stoutly maintained that the taking of a little French village was more important than the capture of Lemberg or Warsaw.

When at the beginning of the Battle of the Somme in July, 1916, the French took 9000 prisoners, he said that it was the most glorious victory in the history of the war. And he made this statement after the victories at Tannenberg, at Gorlice and in Serbia ! But it was from this utter incapacity for estimating the importance of any military operations outside his own particular field of vision that Wilson's very optimism sprang. Had he been able to realise the wide range of the enemy's successes in the field, he would probably not have been so sanguine of victory. The British ministers whom Wilson contemptuously sneered at as "frock-coat soldiers," formed

¹ The campaigns in Mesopotamia and Palestine brought a succession of disasters in their wake from 1914 to 1916, but eventually Britain's might and doggedness won the day.

a far saner estimate of the comparative values of German and Allied victories. But despite the evidence of actual facts, they sought comfort by deferring to the views of their military experts. At no period of the war had Wilson the faintest doubt as to the ultimate issue. With his fiery eloquence and a spate of letters in optimistic vein he combated any symptoms of defeatism or war-weariness wherever he saw them. The glamour of his brilliant intellect and his charming personality fascinated Lloyd George, who made him his special confidant, looked for his moral support when things appeared most grim, and always regarded him as his unofficial adviser. And apart from the services he rendered in his official capacity, his boundless optimism had a wonderful moral reaction on the spirits of the Allies. But it was especially in countries like England and France where the success of the war depended to a large extent on political repercussions that Wilson's sanguine outlook had a beneficent effect. His words of encouragement were a tonic to the war-weary in both nations. The service which he thus rendered to the common cause of the Allies was perhaps the greatest of his many diplomatic triumphs.

In the beginning of 1915 Wilson was appointed to an important post which had just been created, and for which he was specially adapted. He was made "Chief Liaison-Officer" at the French headquarters, and was stationed with Foch's army which occupied a section of the front which was linked up with the British. In his new office he found ample scope for his diplomatic skill. With the growth of the English army began the disputes among the two allies as to the relative lengths of their front lines. These disputes went on right to the end of the war. Naturally enough, of course, each of the two commanders-in-chief wished to be responsible for as short a front as possible. Occasionally similar disputes occurred among the Central Powers, but they sprang from utterly different causes. The narrowmindedness of the Allies went to such extremes that up to the middle of 1918 very rarely did a single division, and never did any higher unit, come under "foreign" control, even when offensives were carried on conjointly. The intermingling of armies, which was a matter of course among the Central Powers, was

scrupulously avoided even in moments of greatest peril. Allied warfare was a problem which the Entente solved with far less success than the Central Powers. In his new and very difficult office Wilson performed extraordinary achievements ; it is probable that if it were not for the fact that his temperament appealed so strongly to the French, and if it were not for his adroit handling of the situation co-ordinated military enterprises could never have been carried out. He was the one British officer that was born for this job, and he did it exceedingly well. It was yet another diplomatic triumph for him.

During the entire course of the war there had never been any English commanders-in-chief. There had been just commanders of armies in the various theatres of war, who in their turn were under the British Cabinet. The chief of the " Imperial General Staff " acted on behalf of the Cabinet in London, and held the highest military rank in the army. But though he represented the Cabinet he was not entitled to a voice at its meetings. An unwieldy body of from twelve to fifteen civilians without any technical knowledge of military affairs and representing divergent interests, decided the question of an offensive or a campaign. At best such issues were decided by a smaller committee. Even at the very beginning of the war Wilson made sardonic jokes as he observed the quaint performances of this heterogeneous assemblage. Apart from the difficulty of securing anything like cohesion, there were ministers among its personnel who thought that Liége was a Belgian fortress and Metz a German one. Every minister wanted to carry on his own little pet war, in order " to show the victory to the people " for which they had been waiting so long in vain on the Western Front. Hence the tragi-comic situation evolved that the First Lord of the Admiralty decided upon the Dardanelles, the Minister of War upon Serbia and Syria, the Colonial Secretary upon Palestine and the Secretary of State for India upon Mesopotamia as their own special little theatres of war. Later on suggestions of a landing in Holland were discussed. This idea was eventually shelved—not, however, through scruples about the question of violating Holland's neutrality. The military experts only succeeded after a great effort in side-tracking some of

these "lay soldiers'" schemes, which were entered upon without giving a thought as to the nation's available forces. Towards the end of 1915 the English and French ministers carried out their project of landing in Salonika, in the naive belief that a few English and French divisions could avert Serbia's doom, and pull Roumania and Greece into the war. And the only objection which the military experts had to these madcap schemes was the fact that they would entail the weakening of the Western Front. It was not the fault of the Allies that Salonika did not prove a disaster of the greatest magnitude. Wilson was ethically wrong, but diplomatically right, in urging that, as they were at the job, they should compel Greece and its "Boche King" to take a hand in the war. But the ministers preferred the slower but surer means of a blockade to attain their objective. Here again there was no suggestion of scruples about violating the neutrality of Greece, but a feeling of genuine wrath because she did not voluntarily join in the scuffle. A passage out of Wilson's diary in which the conduct of the Greeks in not having queued up at once for the fight, and in insisting on remaining neutral, seems utterly inexplicable to him, is a psychological study of English righteous self-sufficiency. "We must take Tino by the throat," runs one excerpt from his diary.

Wilson, like Field-Marshal Robertson, his predecessor as Chief of the Imperial General Staff, maintained stoutly all along that England would have to seek a decisive victory on the Western Front, and on it alone. "After that it would not be necessary to win on any of the other fronts," he always maintained.

The deflecting of something between one-third and one-fourth of the available English forces from the Western Front for these subsidiary enterprises was strongly disapproved by the military experts. Lloyd George especially and deservedly came in for a lot of censure on this score.

In the beginning of 1916 Wilson had charge of a corps, and he was also temporarily in command of an army, but care was taken not to entrust him with any vital issues. During one of the minor enterprises on which he was engaged, the enemy hurled back his troops along a wide

front. He may have been a passable strategist—he certainly was a poor tactician.

His friendship with Lloyd George secured him in the autumn of 1916 an appointment as military representative of the British Mission to Russia, where he proved himself a first-rate commercial traveller and organiser. Great Britain at that time was Russia's greatest purveyor of merchandise and war-material.

The remarks in Wilson's diary under the heading, "Imminent death of the Czar," are rather malevolent, and reflect the views then held by the personnel of the British Embassy at Petrograd. And this was several months before Kerensky came on the scene. In fact Wilson did not see the faintest indication of the coming revolution when he penned these lines.

A particularly difficult task awaited him on his return from Russia. The British Cabinet had already on several occasions carried on negotiations for a unified command on the Western Front, with France in the ascendancy. Lloyd George especially favoured this idea, chiefly because he was convinced that the English generals had not got the training to fit them for the post of Commander-in-Chief on the Western Front. That a French general should have command over all the British troops did not appear workable to most people, but Wilson and all the military experts stood out stoutly against any other form of co-ordination. The British ministers were exasperated with Haig on account of the heavy casualty lists of the Somme, and cynically declined to regard the few strips of land he had won from the enemy as evidences of victory. The English people were very depressed towards the beginning of 1917, so much so that Wilson stated in an entry in his diary that nobody but himself believed any longer in the possibility of victory. Singularly enough too this was the very time when the Central Powers regarded their own position as extremely critical. The feelers they threw out for peace somewhat revived the drooping spirits of the English.

A wave of resentment against Haig swept over London. Nivelle, the French commander-in-chief at the time, was commissioned by the British Government to "co-ordinate" the leadership of the English and French armies.

Wilson was assigned to him as a special English Chief of Staff. Through his medium he was to convey his "arrangements," not his "orders," to the British army. A new opening for clever manipulation of opportunities for the establishment of a unified command was presented to Wilson. Nivelle, however, he decided, would never do for the post—in fact he foresaw the speedy downfall of the French commander.

In warfare there must be "orders," and they entail responsibility. And responsibility rested, as far as the British army was concerned, not on Nivelle, but on Haig. Hence all the English officers were full of resentment against the vague form of hybrid control which had been set up. Unfortunately a series of blunders threw further obstacles in the way of a future genuine unified command. Wilson carried on as best he could under the circumstances. On one occasion when a message sent without Wilson's knowledge by Nivelle to Haig contained the words "I command," there were some heated interchanges between the two commanders. Wilson's diplomatic intervention prevented the dispute from developing into serious proportions.

Following the breakdown of Italy in the autumn of 1917 the creation of a Supreme War Council was quickly rushed through. It included the four premiers, their deputies and four military representatives of the Allies. Although Wilson as British military representative got together a good working staff, the deliberations of the unwieldy organisation just dealt in a vague and blundering way with the coming Allied campaigns, and it had no executive power. It was decided that a number of divisions should be permanently placed at the disposal of the Supreme War Council, drawn from all the armies at the front, "from the North Sea to the Adriatic," in order to act as a reserve against the imminent German offensive. This reserve never came into being, owing to the passive resistance of all the commanders-in-chief. Not one of them was prepared to dispense with a single man in view of the approaching German attack. The history of the intrigues which were carried on, especially by Haig and Pétain against the Supreme War Council, is almost incredible. Wilson with all his wiles found it impossible to cope

with the two astute commanders. About this time, too, his scheme for "buying off" Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey by an offer of favourable peace terms came to nought, owing to the greed of the neighbouring states.

The feeling among the Allies in the beginning of 1918 was confident and comparatively cheerful. They were waiting for the Americans, and decided that in the meanwhile they would rub along as best they could. A great many expressed doubts regarding a German offensive at all. Some were in favour of an Allied attack—just to liven things up. Wilson was feeling so sanguine of imminent victory that he made jokes about the whole thing. And then the nerve-shattering violence of the German offensive in March aroused the Allies from their languorous torpor.

In February, 1918, on the resignation of Robertson, Wilson was appointed Chief of the "Imperial General Staff." Some years previously he had been selected for that post, but the appointment was shelved on internal political grounds. Before the outbreak of the World War Wilson had got into bad odour with the Asquith Cabinet. When the "Ulster Covenanters" had threatened to resist Home Rule for Ireland by force of arms, if necessary, he had backed up the officers of the regiments stationed at the Curragh Camp, who had expressed the desire to resign their commissions rather than fight against Ulster. Wilson had stoutly opposed the sending of British soldiers to Ulster to enforce the operation of the Home Rule Bill. During the war he had strongly urged the Government to extend conscription to Ireland. Lloyd George eventually listened to his suggestions, but the mere threat to force the Irish into the army aroused such a storm of indignation in Erin that he dropped the project. All the men of military age in the country had signed a covenant that they would not attest, if called upon. But even after Lloyd George had given up the idea of applying conscription to Ireland, Wilson kept nagging at him to return to the attack.

When Wilson took over office as Chief of the Imperial War Staff, the most urgent question was that of reserves. This issue, like all other military issues, was decided by the Cabinet and its committees. In reply to a request



THE ARRIVAL OF GI NI RAI LADORNA (CLANTRI) CAI AIS, MARCH 1916
Inperial War Museum

by Wilson (his predecessor had made a similar plea) for a reserve force of 600,000 men for 1918, the Cabinet only granted 100,000, contending that if they sent a larger number they would not be able to cope with their internal troubles. They added that even as it was the British army in the field would have to take up just a defensive attitude in 1918, and must have no casualties to speak of! They pointed out too that provided they did not "comb out" any more civilians for active service, they hoped that it would help to put a stop to strikes and general unrest.

And it was owing to this dread of trouble at home that just one month before the German offensive the English divisions had to be reduced 25 per cent, i.e. from twelve to nine battalions. Plans were also made in advance for the disbandment of several more divisions during the course of the year.

The first German offensive in March, 1918, practically wiped out two British armies, and proved a rude awakening to all the Allies. Wilson's activity during those anxious moments was of historic significance in two senses. Four days after the opening of the attack the French commander-in-chief, Pétain, decided that the predominant consideration was the defence of Paris and the consequent concentration of his armies towards the south. It was to Haig's interest, on the other hand, to retreat westward towards the Channel Ports, which formed his lines of communication. This divergence of objectives on the part of the two armies might very easily have entailed a loss of contact between the English and French and the consequent complete collapse of the Western Front. Wilson and his immediate superior, Lord Milner, the Minister for War, were kept constantly on the move between headquarters and Paris. And all the time while they were *en route* Wilson used all his influence to prevail on Lord Milner to appoint Foch, whom the English knew best and whose military achievements so far had been unimpeachable, to the Supreme Command. Wilson's original idea of entrusting Clemenceau, with Foch as Chief of Staff, with "supreme control of the war" was shelved on account of Foch's opposition. Consequently Wilson decided to do his

utmost in conjunction with Haig to get the British forces placed under the control of a "foreign general." He was more anxious even than Pétain and Clemenceau were to attain this objective.

Wilson and Lord Milner decided on their own initiative upon the appointment of Foch for the office, as they saw that he was the most suitable General for the purpose of maintaining contact between the British and French armies. And so without asking for the approval of the British Cabinet (a proceeding without precedent in the history of England) the great British army in France was placed under the command of a French general. The risk of losing the war was thereby momentarily averted. It is extremely improbable that the appointment would have been made at such an opportune moment were it not for Wilson's intervention. As it was, Foch had only been appointed in the nick of time. The consequences of a delay or a hitch in connection with his taking up office would have been incalculable.

Wilson followed up this courageous step by another no less important. He literally stamped the Cabinet with the overwhelming proofs he gave of the imminence of disaster. Within two weeks the most drastic measures were rushed through under his inspiration. Malignerers and convalescents alike were "combed out" of the hospitals, and the military service age limit was extended from fifty-one to fifty-five. All the troops who had hitherto been detained in England to provide against the risk of an invasion were bundled off to France to a man. From all the factories and mines every available man was taken. Instead of the 100,000 men, the number originally decided upon, 800,000 men were sent to France in the course of a couple of months to fill up the yawning gaps along the Western Front. A new Press campaign, promoted by Army Headquarters, gingered up the recruiting. From all the subsidiary theatres of war all the troops that could be spared were requisitioned to fill the ranks of death. And even with the aid of these sweeping measures the English army barely managed to maintain its full strength to the end of the war. England had played her last card.

During the final English offensive, which lasted for

nearly three months and a half, Wilson acted with great success as an intermediary between Foch and Haig. In October, 1918, when the terms of an armistice were already under discussion, Wilson and Haig were among those who deprecated harsh conditions. It was impossible to foresee, he wrote in his diary at the time, how the war could be carried on through the winter, as the British, though still prepared to stick it out, were weary and absolutely bereft of any reserves, while the French were not only utterly exhausted, but were no longer either fit or willing to fight, while the Americans, though eager for battle, were absolutely inexperienced. It was easy for the Americans to talk about going on with the war, he concluded, seeing that they had only started fighting just recently.

After the Armistice the British army was demobilised with precipitate haste for political reasons. The menace of Bolshevism loomed very ominously in England. The army had done its work. The important thing now was to disarm it and scatter it as soon and as quietly as possible. Wilson exercised the greatest care in picking out a few battalions for the Army of Occupation in Germany.

When the trouble broke out with the Germans after the conclusion of peace Wilson was asked whether it was possible to settle it by force of arms. Both he and Foch agreed that an advance further than twenty-five or thirty miles east of the Rhine was absolutely impossible. "And if an invading army advanced that far, what was it to do ?" they asked. "Was it just to occupy territory for an indefinite period ?"

Summing up, it is clear that the part played by Wilson in the entry of England into the war, in her holding out against terrible odds, in her co-operation with the French, in the appointment of Foch as commander-in-chief on the Western Front, and in marshalling the last available British reserves for the last great offensive, proves him to have been by far the greatest military diplomat that the Great War produced. The great strategic vision that he showed in his limited sphere as a liaison officer, his calm courage, his buoyant optimism and that impish sense of humour that again and again asserted itself when things looked grimmest and blackest,

show that had he been given command on the Western Front, he would have been as tenacious as Haig, but would have displayed far more initiative than French's hard-slogging successor. But in the very early stages of the war, Wilson was side-tracked by Asquith and Lloyd George owing to the part he had played in shelving the "Bill for the Better Government of Ireland"—popularly termed the Home Rule Bill.

Three years and a half after the thunder of the guns had ceased to shake Europe Sir Henry Wilson was shot dead on his own doorstep in London by two Irishmen. He had just returned from presiding at an ex-servicemen's ceremonial, and was dressed in his field-marshall's uniform. Before he fell, fatally wounded, he had faced his assailants and half-unsheathed his sword: A brave soldier's soldierly gesture in death!

For some time previous to his assassination Sir Henry had been urging the British Cabinet to take drastic steps to suppress the unrest among the Nationalist element in Northern Ireland who were agitating for the abolition of the partition of the island. Although by the admission of his assailants the motive of the assassination was political, it is generally accepted that they were fanatics who acted on their own initiative, and not at the instigation of any Irish organisation.

Sir Henry had, as already mentioned, taken a very active part before the war in the movement for resisting, by force of arms, if necessary, the inclusion of Ulster in the Home Rule Bill for Ireland. He was a prominent member of the Ulster organisation which, by a queer paradox, was to prove its loyalty to the Crown by fighting against a statute which had been passed by Parliament and was to receive the King's imprimatur. He took an active interest in the "Ulster Volunteers," who under the ægis of Lord Carson, were drilling and systematically gun-running with the avowed intention of fighting against the British army, if it were used for the purpose of enforcing the Home Rule Bill. A queerer paradox than the loyalty of the "Volunteers" was the fact that the smuggled rifles came from Germany.

The following is an extract from Sir Henry's diary on the occasion of his visit to Belfast in January, 1914:

"The arrangements of the Ulster army are well advanced, and there is no doubt of the discipline and spirit of men and officers. I must come over later and see the troops at work. Many remarkable stories of Carson's power were told me by the 'Ulster army.' (Here he means Lord Carson's "Volunteers.")

Subjoined are a couple of further excerpts from Sir Henry's diary which speak for themselves:

"Bonar Law telephoned wanting to see me, and I went at once. He told me of the mobilisation of the Ulster men last night and of the way they got in 25,000 rifles (the evening papers say 70,000)."

"Seely sent for me to ask what I thought of the Ulster situation. I told him . . . that the Government are done, that they have bumped up against 100,000 men who are in deadly earnest, and that as neither the Cabinet nor Englishmen are ever in earnest about anything, Ulster was sure to win."

Sir Henry Wilson used to boast that he had done more than any other individual man to commit England to take part in the Great War. He might have made the bigger boast that indirectly he did more than any man, with the exception of the Serajevo assassins, to bring Germany into the war.

Some months previous to the outbreak of the Great War, Von Kuhlman visited Ulster on behalf of the Berlin Government to study the political situation there. On his return to Berlin he expressed the view that Great Britain was on the verge of civil war.

A few months after the Great War had broken out, Mr. Gerard, the American ambassador at Berlin, was recalled to Washington. He parted on amicable terms with the German Government, and had absolutely no personal interest in the great struggle which was shaking the world. Consequently there could have been no ulterior motive behind his statement in his "memoirs," published shortly after his return, that one of the factors which eventually made Germany decide to join in the war was her belief that Britain would be too preoccupied

with the menace of civil war in Ireland to plunge into the European vortex.

And from this dispassionate statement by an American diplomat who knew Berlin well, and was very friendly disposed towards both Germany and Britain, we can deduce that Sir Henry Wilson and the other contingent Ulster rebels helped to extend the area of the Great War.

HAIG—THE BULL

IN December, 1915, French, the first commander-in-chief of the British army on the Western Front, was recalled. His nervous breakdown towards the end of August, 1914, had considerably shaken public confidence in him, and the Press campaign about inadequate munition supplies which he led against the British Government, as well as the futility of his military enterprises during 1915, had made his position untenable. Foremost among his probable successors from the very outset had been Sir Douglas Haig. In the previous engagements as commander, first of a corps, and afterwards of an army, he had acquired the reputation of being a man of iron nerve, of initiative and self-reliance. His imposing appearance, his genial personality and his political integrity were also deciding factors in his promotion; and, at any rate, in the small British army the range of choice was necessarily limited. Haig received from the Government the same instructions as his predecessor, and a guarantee was given him that he would be absolutely independent of outside control. Moreover, he had sufficient grit to see that the guarantee should be kept.

His task was to defend the French Channel Ports and to keep the lines of communication with England unbroken. In the beginning of 1918 he was destined to find out both these tasks extremely difficult.

Sir Douglas took over supreme command in December, 1915, just at the moment when the British Expeditionary Force had grown sufficiently strong to undertake big ventures in the field on its own account. Consequently this was the precise time when British generalship could begin to have any real effect on the trend of developments along the Western Front. Sir Douglas showed in his character the outstanding features of the English people,

and formed in this respect a striking contrast to Wilson's Irish temperament. It was Haig's boundless assertiveness, added to his austerity and doggedness, that made him follow with grim tenacity, despite successive failures, any objectives which he set out to achieve. Occasionally his doggedness of purpose assumed the form of pig-headedness. But taking all in all, and making allowances for his definite limitations, Haig will go down to history as an efficient and strong-willed general.

A common plan of campaign had already been laid down by the Allies for the year 1916 when Sir Douglas took over the command. As the Russians could not start their great offensive before the end of June, and as, moreover, the English army on the West Front was expecting during the early months of 1916 several new divisions which had to be knocked into shape first and to become acclimatised to trench-warfare, the general attack by all the Allies with massed forces was fixed for July 1st. Haig fell in with this arrangement, which was, however, forestalled by the German offensive against Verdun in February. A few days after it opened, the position of the French was one of imminent peril, and Haig volunteered to man a section of the French front with British troops, an offer which was gratefully accepted, and which with the steady increase of British divisions up to April, 1916, led to the formation of a compact English front from Ypres to the Somme. Haig, however, would not hear of a premature offensive in order to relieve the pressure at Verdun—incidentally Joffre fully agreed with him that such a step would be inadvisable, as it would have meant the imperilling of a force which was only in the process of getting into ship-shape. Haig also had a genius for providing a series of new rail tracks along his communication lines, and thereby he relieved the congestion of space available at the rear.

On July 1st, the date fixed for the attack, the British army was prepared for its first great test. And now the chief rôle in the great offensive inevitably devolved upon it, as the French were kept busy on the Verdun sector. This meant an extraordinarily difficult task for Haig's troops—practically raw levies to a large extent. From

the outset, however, he did not contemplate a penetration of the German lines or a smashing through them as absolutely essential, and aimed rather at a process of attrition. In adopting this course he had the full approval of Joffre, as well as of Foch, the local French commander. The attrition process, which aims at exhausting the enemy, was moulded into a regular system by French, Joffre and Foch in 1915, when they found it impossible to resume the warfare of manœuvre. The advantages attached to such a system of attack were rather dubious in the case of the very exhausted French army of 1916, but Haig was thoroughly justified in experimenting with it, as his divisions were in every respect fresh and untried, while he had strong reserves. Moreover, this method of fighting was in accord with the dogged tenacity of his troops, and demanded extraordinary tactical ingenuity.

Haig was right in his doubts regarding the success of an effort to smash through the German lines. The Franco-British offensive, which was started without any outstanding surprise tactics, after a barrage which lasted for a whole day, soon evolved into a contest of attrition. From the very outset there were divergencies of view between the British and the French as to the way in which the attack should be carried on. The pig-headed Haig had his way, and was successful in his objective. Unremittingly day after day the fierce onslaught of the British army continued. Like an infuriated bull, Haig rushed again and again to the attack with a view to wearing down the Germans and shattering their nerves. After three weeks of appalling carnage the French, utterly exhausted, fell out of the fight, despite the support given by their splendid artillery. Haig, however, stuck doggedly to his guns, and simply would not give the enemy any rest. Again and again and again he delivered deadly thrusts at the same points along the German front. He was resolved to follow up this wearing-out process to the bitter end, as he was firmly convinced that in the long run the British would prove to have longer wind and stronger nerves than the Germans.

When Haig first started his wearing-out tactics his enemies, surrounded on both fronts by enormously superior forces, had been fighting for their very existence

for two years. And at the end of August the British attack assumed an intensified form, while the French again entered the arena. Haig's dogged tenacity accorded thoroughly with the temperament of the inflexible Foch, his comrade in the fray. The British battalions set the pace and the momentum of the attack. With obstinate courage they rushed forward—now at this point, now at that. It was a persistent, unrelenting onset. Week after week they kept at it, impelled by the consciousness that the intensity of the Brussilov offensive, the entrance of Roumania into the war and the fall of Gorizia afforded the most opportune moment to the united forces of the Allies for making a supreme effort for a concerted onslaught on the forces of the Central Powers. Fate, moreover, seemed to offer them an opportunity such as they had never had before. Haig had been keenly aware of this, and was prepared to do his part by hammering at the foe tenaciously and persistently. It was all in vain, however. Towards the end of September the battle ceased. Haig continued to keep his front busy, of course, with minor engagements, and occasional local incursions into the enemy's lines, but there were no more big engagements. At the beginning of November the exhausted British army virtually dozed off into its winter sleep.

In the Somme battle the first experiments were made with tanks by the British. The results were not satisfactory, but Haig decided with grim tenacity to continue the tests. It was the first original mechanical device applied by the Allies during the war, and, as events proved, it was destined to be the last. The Central Powers, on the other hand, had to their credit a grand array of inventions in heavy artillery, gas, submarines and mine-throwers. Haig was now resolved not to miss the opportunity offered by the tanks. Two years were spent in building them and experimenting with them, and in July, 1918, a comparatively serviceable new weapon was ready for action.

Before the end of 1916 Haig agreed with Joffre and Foch to follow up the Somme battle at the same sector and with all available armaments early in the new year. This decision was inspired by the tenacity of Haig, who

had regarded the temporary symptoms of exhaustion in the German army as a proof of the effectiveness of his war of attrition. The Paris and London war departments held a different view. Joffre and Foch fell into disfavour owing to the terrific sacrifice of human life, and were relieved of office. In London, too, people were by no means satisfied with the Somme record. At most all that Haig could do was to recapture a few battered trenches and ruined villages—a sorry result when contrasted with the triumphal progress of the enemy in Roumania, Serbia or Russia. The achievement which was not shown on the map, on the other hand, namely the wearing down of the Germans, appeared to have been attained at a far too heavy price. The never-ending heavy casualty lists had a dismaying effect. It was the first time in her history that England had to face such terrific sacrifices, and a wave of indignation and protest swept the island from shore to shore. The temper of the people might vent itself with disastrous effect upon the Government at any moment. Consequently the discharge of Joffre and Foch was greeted with a sigh of relief in Downing Street. The motto of Nivelle, the new French commander, "Never again a battle on the lines of the Somme," found a responsive echo among the English ministers. With confident hope they looked forward to his new plan of attack, which promised speedy and splendid results with a minimum loss of life. They seriously considered the question of relieving Haig of office, but they dismissed the idea soon as nobody could suggest a successor to him. The Ministers, however, were determined to cramp Haig's style by issuing an order that he was to submit to Nivelle's instructions regarding the plan of campaign of 1917.

After the snub he had received from his Government, Haig was inclined at first to resign, but his irrepressible doggedness made him stick on. Things were made a little easier for him, too, when General Wilson was invited to assist Nivelle. Haig was never quite satisfied with the feasibility of Nivelle's plan, and when it showed symptoms of collapse, the stubborn English general reverted to his Somme tactics. It was a great triumph to Sir Douglas during the course of these weeks to sidetrack the plan of

an attack by the Allies in Italy, which was warmly championed by Lloyd George, Cadorna and others. But for this very reason he felt it imperative to justify by satisfactory results the plan he put forward with vehemence for the precedence of the Western Front. And success was the more imperative, as the alternative was the certainty of dismissal.

During the weeks that followed the subordination of Haig to Nivelle, important events occurred which completely altered the arrangements for the Franco-British attack. The Russian Revolution of March ended all hope of further help from the most powerful of the Allies. The German retreat to the so-called "Hindenburg line" made a radical change of position in the projected Western Front attack imperative. Above all, joint action between the British and French became thereby impossible. And finally the Italians stated that, owing to the pressure from enemy forces who had been set free on the Eastern and Western Fronts, an attack on their own account was for the present impossible. And so the two Allies on the Western Front stood alone. Haig began to ponder seriously trying to make a move on his own initiative. America had already entered the war, and was soon destined to make up for Russia's defection. Though his views were not endorsed in Paris, Haig's mind was stubbornly set on an attack. He knew that Nivelle must lead his army to victory ; failure would mean the end of his supreme command and a return to the war of attrition. Moreover, Haig felt that an attack was the best means to deprive the Central Powers of the dread possibility of putting completely out of action one or the other of the two Allies that were tottering on the verge of collapse — Italy and Russia. Haig was not in a position to know that the enemy contemplated neither objective at the moment. He started the attack at Arras which Nivelle had planned, and dragged the still undecided French with him. Although the British venture did not end up in a definite reverse, as Nivelle's did, since Haig had not built up any extravagant expectations regarding it, it was, however, futile. Sir Douglas, however, could say with a clear conscience that he was always opposed to selecting Arras as a point of attack. Moreover, he had succeeded

by a brilliant coup in taking Vimy Ridge, an enterprise for which he won Nivelle's sanction only with the greatest difficulty, although it was much on the lines of his own coup at Verdun. It was, moreover, a proof that Haig was quite adept at this type of tactics, although, contrary to its founder, he used it merely for minor objectives. Nivelle was recalled, and the French supreme command ended with him. Haig was henceforth independent.

With renewed independence, however, Haig found himself confronted with the most difficult task he had encountered so far. The collapse of Nivelle's attack had left the French army unfit for action for the moment. Britain's tottering ally, Italy, was becoming more and more unfit every day to withstand an attack by either of the Central Powers. The danger that after a sharp final thrust at Russia, they might put Italy out of action, and then concentrate on the Western Front, and possibly enfilade the British, was becoming more imminent daily. Could these two nations hold out until America put an army into the field, and if so, what was the best way to enable them to hold out? This was the great problem for Haig and the British Government.

It is easy to visualise the position of the West Front commander in May, 1917. Again and again the Germans succeeded in thwarting the plans of the Allies. They took them by surprise and anticipated their every move. Heavy blows were dealt at each of the Allies in turn. Only once in the summer of 1916 did they succeed for a while in the objective that they had so often striven for—co-ordinated effort in a general offensive which put the enemy in the most critical position he had so far experienced. It would have been inexcusable not to strain every nerve at this juncture to prevent the Central Powers from building up reserves, and making a fresh and probably a deadly thrust against Italy, Russia, or even France. This danger could be obviated by an attack only—never by hanging on in a condition of stalemate. One can understand the British Government's ready approval of Haig's proposals on this score, which also coincided with earnest suggestions of the French military authorities. There were no divergences of opinion either with regard to the sector on which the

attack should open. For the British front the threat on the Belgian Channel Ports was exceedingly perilous from a military point of view, while in recent months the submarine menace had enormously increased. It could be considerably checked by capturing the Belgian sea-board. A much weightier problem, however, was that of the method of attack. Again and again the Allies had in vain tried to force a renewal of the warfare of movement by breaking through the German lines—the only way of escape from the eternal trench-fighting. Manœuvres on the lines of those of the Central Powers and Nivelle's new style of fighting had been invariably frustrated on all fronts. Consequently, they found themselves in a cul-de-sac, and there was nothing for it now but the war of attrition. And taking into consideration the inevitability of this method of fighting, the Commanders of the Allies could look upon the numerical superiority of their own as a compensation for the chances of this dubious style of engagement.

Shrewdly mindful of the storm which his Somme battle had evoked, however, he shrank from drawing the attention of his Government too bluntly to the toll of blood they were about to be called upon to pay again. Moreover, by doing so he would have proclaimed too plainly how slender his achievements had been, compared with those of the generals of the enemy forces. It was, consequently, rather calculated "hedging" than genuine faith in the feasibility of the plan that led Haig to talk about capturing the Belgian sea-board. He had the same mental reservation as in the days of the Nivelle offensive: "Well, if it doesn't come off, it will have to be just attrition again." The scheme of attack visualised by Haig and the British Government slumped gradually owing to this very mental proviso into a state of utter stalemate. And the terrific onslaughts which Haig made during the course of the great Flanders slaughter of 1917 were a corollary to this proviso.

The campaign started promisingly. First of all there was a short preliminary push in June, planned once more on the lines of Nivelle's coups. Then in the middle of July the British divisions began their great Flanders battle in earnest. Previous to it there had been an

ominous lull on all enemy fronts. More than two months had elapsed since the collapse of Russia, the German retreat and Nivelle's April offensive without the dreaded attack by the enemy on any quarter. He had not budged on the Russian or the Italian front—he seemed to have only a belated and partial knowledge of the weakness of the French lines. The year was already far advanced—every month brought the American attack nearer. Under the circumstances it seems quite comprehensible why Haig kept hammering away hard at his tedious, deliberate, unremitting attack. The quietness of the enemy was absolutely uncanny.

Exactly in accordance with Haig's mental proviso, the British failed again in their main objective. Once more in Flanders the war of attrition kept dragging on. With extraordinary tenacity Haig fought for weeks at a time for the possession of hillocks, shell-holes, battered trenches and ruined villages. Again and again the British troops spent their strength in reckless frenzied onslaughts. Of course the German defenders also suffered severely under the nerve-shattering persistent pressure, but it looked as if they wanted to show cynically that they would frustrate British calculations. They wanted to keep quiet until July, to time their attack in East Galicia shortly after Haig's offensive. The overthrow of Russia and later on of Italy, would make such scant demands relatively on their resources, owing to the increasing weakness of both nations, that it would be an impossible job for the British to prevent their bringing up their reserves.

The fight had now gone on almost unremittingly for two months—July and August—but Haig still stuck it out. All sorts of extravagant plans were revolving in his mind. He seemed to aim at finishing the war by the sheer strength of the British army alone. At first he was not even too keen on accepting help from the French. But at all events he was resolved that the decisive blow would not be struck by the Americans, as the French had resolved. It looked as if Haig's mental vision was dimmed by the Flanders heat-mist. With frenzied, dogged tenacity he sent his troops again and again to the attack. Army after army was hurled against the Germans—

week after week—month after month. In spite of its numerical superiority, which was counterbalanced by more scientific leadership on the side of the Germans, the task was too great for the British army; its resources were overtaxed as were those of the Austro-Hungarian army in 1914 in the campaign against Russia. September and October passed by in the drear monotony of the never-ending campaign of exhaustion. Even the Italian collapse and the sending of divisions to that country did not end Haig's wild assaults. He was resolved to wrest from fate by bloodshed the victory that he should have gained by superior generalship and tactics. It was only the arrival of winter that brought the dreadful contest to an end. After the French army had broken itself against the foe, the British army got its first bad blow. The result was devastating. The British people were horrified at the appalling carnage. There were more and more fierce protests, the outcome of war-weariness, and a cry of indignation was raised against the general who had allowed the Flanders "shambles" to follow in the wake of the slaughter on the Somme.

Haig strove to restore the equanimity of the people by a masterly coup. With the aid of tanks he won in November a brilliant success, which, however, was not followed up. His jubilation was brief. A counter-attack by the Germans won back all that he had gained. Haig was in a tight corner now. He found that on the eve of the great German onslaught his available infantry strength had been reduced by one-fourth. After eighteen months of intensive fighting the British Government was no longer in a position to fill up the gaps in its army. The reserves of men and officers were being rapidly depleted. The men in the trenches were exhausted and disillusioned. They had not known the thrill of a victorious advance with the capture of booty and territory, and though they had probably long since settled down stoically to the belief that the war would never be anything but an endless gnawing process, the strain was beginning to tell terribly on them.

The enemy, to be sure, had also suffered terribly. It was, however, wrong to attribute to exhaustion the



GENERAL DIAZ

Central News

slackening in German resistance in the second half of the year 1918, and to infer therefrom that the war of attrition which Haig had deliberately carried out to the bitter end, had been completely successful.

Even after the conclusion of the Flanders fighting, Haig, perhaps luckily for himself, was still far from having a complete knowledge of the situation. In his view the inevitable consequence of his method of attrition was that the Germans were practically too crippled to try on an offensive, and that in 1918 they would have to play a defensive game. Self-confidence, British phlegm and doggedness, as well as inadequate experience of the violence of the enemy's offensive potentiality and an over-estimation of the effect of his own attacks, were at the back of this opinion. And it was because he had this impression about the enemy, that he did not draw the obvious conclusion from the shrinkage of the strength of his own infantry. Instead of doing so, he devoted himself to intrigues against the Supreme War Council which had been appointed in November, 1917. His very logical objection that a many-headed assembly could not command an army, led him to challenge its authority, instead of trying to strengthen the position of the President of the Council, or suggesting the appointment of an efficient commander-in-chief for the Western Front.

After their unhappy experiment with Nivelle in 1917, the British Government drew what comfort they could from Haig's assurance about his comprehensive arrangements with Pétain. These arrangements provided among other things for mutual support in the event of a German attack. How hopeless the efforts at co-ordination between the two commanders were, may be gleaned from their rather heated discussions about the relative length of the sectors along the Western Front for which each of them was responsible. In connection with this the difficult line of defence manned by the British with the sea so close to their rear carried great weight. Each of the two commanders wanted to limit the length of his own front as much as possible, and each upheld his own point of view by every means in his power. There was a deluge of notes and protests. There were attacks made on both

Governments, inflammatory speeches, missions and emissaries galore. This extraordinary squabble between the two commanders, taken in conjunction with their mutual intriguing against the Supreme War Council, was both unedifying and depressing at a time fraught with such perilous possibilities.

This unsatisfactory state of affairs had reached its worst stage when a fresh source of discord emerged. Counting out the doubters who thought that a German attack was unlikely, there was considerable discussion as to the point where the blow would fall. With extraordinary unanimity every officer along the Western Front declared that his own particular section of the line would bear the brunt of the attack. The uneasiness of the Allied generals and the feints by the enemy caused a feeling of tension all along the front. Both Haig and Pétain insisted that the offensive would be made against their respective fronts. Haig had actually calculated that the least menaced part of his front line was the very spot on which the full fury of the offensive crashed, and he placed his reserves in accordance with his forecast. This pivot of the German attack was the section of the front that had recently, after a good deal of bickering, been taken over from the French. The bespoke co-operation between the Allies which never materialised, was first to be concentrated on this stretch. And so the vicious circle revolved—squabbles about the length of their respective front lines, no common reserve forces, inadequate co-operation between Haig and Pétain, and underestimation of the enemy's strength and ignorance of his plans. The hopeless ineptitude of the Allies had developed into a tragic-comedy that was unique in the history of the war. Haig's and Pétain's blunders alone would have fully justified a German victory. It certainly was not their fault that the enemy gave them the chance of stopping short when they were on the verge of the precipice, and changing the trend of the war.

The first German offensive in March, 1918, crashed upon the British army with terrific violence. It came as a complete surprise to Haig both with regard to its objectives and its intensity. It was a horrible awakening from his phlegmatic complacency. In a few days he

saw his whole fabric of dreams collapsing about his ears. He had not gnawed away the strength of the Germans with his attrition process, and his plans for cohesion with Pétain had failed. And he knew that the British army, exhausted by the prolonged Flanders fighting, could not hold out for long against the onset of the Germans. Indeed it is extremely questionable whether the German attack could have been so successful had not the British army been so utterly worn out. Apropos of this, it is significant that the *morale* of the British was so shaken at the time of the arrival of the first American drafts, that these new allies were taunted by them "for prolonging the war."

Haig saw that the fate of the world's greatest empire was hanging by a thin thread, and he gave the alarm. The mistakes made by the enemy prevented his cry of distress from being belated. His appeal implied a complete change from his previous attitude of dogged self-sufficiency, and an admission of serious faults and blunders. He earnestly appealed for the immediate appointment of a commander-in-chief of all the Allied armies on the Western Front.

Although Foch could not perform any miracles off-hand, his appointment appreciably accelerated the bringing up of French reserves, and had, above all, an extraordinarily favourable moral effect on the British generals and troops who were fighting with the courage of despair. And even comparatively minor issues assumed great importance at this critical period in the spring of 1918. During the lull that followed the first German attack Foch's position was more firmly consolidated at the instigation of Haig.

In the beginning of April the second German offensive started. Foch stood the test of his new office with great success. Haig had summoned up all his reserves to face the onset, as he knew that he could look forward to speedy assistance. And the doggedness of the British character won through once more. At the end of the month the danger was past. It had been a very near thing this time for Haig, but his bull-dog tenacity and the steadfastness of his troops kept the enemy from breaking through.

withdrawn from his front, but also ten of his own divisions had been absorbed into other divisions on account of casualties. The British Government took Haig's side.

In the beginning of July, 1918, the scene was completely changed. The main German attack started in full fury on both sides of Rheims. By this time the gaps in the British army had been to a very large extent filled up. And so Haig on this occasion voluntarily placed English divisions at Foch's disposal. This decision, following so closely on the recent successful ruse of the enemy and the violence of his onset, showed Haig's eagerness to play his part and his anxiety for the safety of the entire Western Front. The British Government's protests to Haig on this occasion against permitting his troops to man the French front seems inexplicable. It was not easy for the British commander to disregard a hint of this kind. The part that he played in the result of the second Battle of the Marne is all the more wonderful when we take into account this badgering that he had to endure from the blundering amateur warriors of Downing Street.

After the success of the counter-attack of the Allies on the Marne sector in July, 1918, Haig saw that his time at length had come. It was now obvious that symptoms of war-weariness were appearing in the German army. Thanks to Haig's Press campaign for the speeding-up of reserves, and the three months' lull, the British army was again in good fettle for the fray. At any rate it was sooner in a condition than the French army was to obey the call of Foch and hold on grimly to the initiative which the Allies had now assumed. Haig was in command of the most powerful army on the Western Front, and was probably even keener than Foch himself to start a great offensive which was to be kept up to the bitter end. In a spirit of dogged determination he started the engagement which was to turn the tide of the war. This attack was even more successful than the July one. The defeatism of the enemy had been far more apparent after it was over. It was an extraordinary dispensation of fate that the two great protagonists of warfare by attrition, Foch and Haig, were the outstanding generals in these

last months of the war. Foch had come to grief as a result of the Battle of the Somme, and Haig, owing to the Somme and the Flanders battles, had only held on to office because the British Government could not find a competent successor to him. And now both generals in unison were carrying on the fight with the same "wearing-out" tactics to a victorious issue. Foch could wish for no more loyal co-operator in the practical exposition of his theory of warfare than the British marshal. There were, of course, incidental divergences of opinion about the objectives of the attack or about the disposition of the troops. Haig was fully conscious of the task which devolved on him. The British army was actually the only one that was still capable of fighting. The French army to all intents and purposes could fight no more—the American army not yet. And so he stoically took on his own shoulders the main burden of the battle, because he saw that the possibility of forcing a decision loomed ahead. Bull-like, he rushed at the enemy in a series of colossal onsets. The area of his offensive extended more and more, until the whole Western Front re-echoed to the thunder of his persistent onslaughts. The casualty lists became heavier and heavier. The British Government plainly intimated to Haig that he must not continue fighting in such a fashion unless he could give them a guarantee that he would win. Perhaps this very warning by the Government made the dogged commander decide to tax his army's strength to the utmost. He subjected his troops to a similar strain to that put on their own men by Hindenburg and Ludendorff after the failure of their first attack in the spring of 1918, and that put on their forces by Alexejev and Brussilov in the autumn of 1916.

Haig saw on one side the menace of imminent dismissal, coupled with the increasing exhaustion and war-weariness of his troops. On the other side his observant eye now saw definite demonstrations of that prostration and defeatism among the Germans to which he had confidently looked forward as the result of his attrition process. Haig had been the first to entertain from these symptoms the hope that the final battle was imminent. He was now convinced that such was the

case, and deliberately threw his entire army into the conflict.

The battle went on breathlessly, ceaselessly. The British army, though relatively smaller, confronted as many German divisions as the exhausted French forces did. The brunt of the final engagement was borne by the British troops under Haig. Lloyd George's dictum was to come true that the winning army would be the one that could hold out for a quarter of an hour longer than its opponent. Haig had played for high stakes. After Foch, the main glory of having made the German army collapse was due to him. He knew that he was chancing his last throw. Had the war gone on into 1919, both the British and French armies would have been decidedly on the wane, both physically and morally. British policy and British self-reliance could never tolerate the disproportionate ascendancy in American prestige and American power which a victory won mainly by American troops would entail.

When the war came to an end, not only the French, but also the English were almost played out. Haig's tenacity had just barely gained the day. Attrition tactics had won the greatest war in history. And yet it is very doubtful whether this method would have been effective had it been employed for a little longer.

Haig used his utmost influence to effect a mitigation of the terms of the Armistice. His attitude was the outcome not only of his conviction as a soldier of the risks attendant on another winter's campaign, but also of his belief that an utterly weakened Germany would connote the danger to Britain of an overstrong France. His Government refused to accept his point of view, and all his efforts to induce them to do so were in vain. The war ended inconclusively both for him and for the British Government.

In the big final struggle which ended the war, Haig played a great part by his persistent hammering at the enemy after he had raised the alarm in March. But it was his aggressive attrition methods in the last few months of the war, carried out despite the exhaustion of his men and countless other obstacles, that paved the way for the speedy ending of the contest. With the exception

of Foch, none of the Allied commanders would have been capable of achieving such a Herculean task. The goal for which the British marshal aimed justified the great risks he ran, and perhaps he realised even sooner than Foch did, the psychological moment when Germany's luck had turned.

CADORNA—THE THEORIST

ITALY'S armies fought eleven battles, under the leadership of Cadorna, on the Isonzo in the space of twenty-eight months. If one deducts from this period the winter months, it works out at an offensive almost every six weeks. On no other theatre of war was there a similar steady succession of battles staged at the same place. It took a unique type of general to get his troops to face such a task. Unique, too, were the circumstances that led up to such a series of practically abortive efforts. Cadorna, the scion of a family with a distinguished military record, came from the north of Italy, from Piedmont, the cradle of unified Italy and of its ruling house—a land, too, that has given the kingdom most of its famous generals. He was a silent, dour and self-conscious man, well up in the history of wars since prehistoric days and in all branches of his profession. Cadorna was not a typical Italian. His absent-minded manner and his lack of humour and vivacity were Nordic traits inherited from German ancestors who centuries ago settled in the low-lying plains of northern Italy.

Cadorna was, above all things, a theoretical soldier. That does not mean that he was incapable of carrying his theories into practice himself, though he frequently failed lamentably in the effort to do so. Occasionally, on the other hand, he showed extraordinary strategic and tactical ability in translating into action on the battlefield the schemes which he had evolved in his study.

Cadorna had only taken over the command of the Italian army a few months before the greater part of Europe was embroiled in the Great War. The sixty-two-year-old general was only too well aware that the condition of the army would not permit its immediate participation in the war. He was exceedingly grateful for the immediate respite secured by the intriguing of the

politicians, and made good use of it in eliminating a series of abuses and defects in the daily routine and training of the army, and in taking steps to be ready to take the field with fully equipped and efficient forces when the inevitable hour arrived. The supplies of artillery, machine-guns and munitions were increased and brought up to date. For many years the Italian War Office had been unable to come to a decision as to the best "system" of military training. Moreover, the fibre of the army had sadly deteriorated during the war in Tripoli, just as the Russian army had deteriorated during the Japanese campaign, as the very best of the soldiers and vast supplies of the most up-to-date war material had been drafted out of the country. The consequences of this tapping of the army's resources was very much in evidence even in 1914. Cadorna did wonders in his efforts to remedy this long-standing evil. He had a more difficult job in remedying the wastage that had occurred in the officers' corps. On the one hand the material and social position of the lower grades was so wretched, that through "compassion," many soldiers, who were, strictly speaking, unsuitable for promotion, were given higher rank after waiting for years for it. On the other hand, a serious abuse of the "right to complain" had relaxed the bonds of discipline. Cadorna was rather unfortunate in his efforts to dispense with the services of unsuitable people. He gripped the reins of discipline firmly—perhaps too firmly and too suddenly. Yet, with all the limitations to his efforts in this direction, he did some excellent reconstruction work for the army during the ten months of neutrality.

The preparations for taking part in the war, in a narrower sense, were started with great zeal at the beginning of the year 1915. Cadorna had entertained the theoretically magnificent idea of adopting quite a novel scheme of mobilisation which would be carried out in the guise of a "secret" deployment. His idea was analogous to the manœuvres which Russia frequently adopted during peace-time. Cadorna ordered the greater part of his army to assemble in the deployment area, but took care in doing so not to interfere in the slightest degree even for one hour with the normal railway services of the nation. The colossal machine of a modern army of one

million in strength was put together piece by piece with the most scrupulous accuracy of detail. The calling up of the reserves went on slowly, but without a hitch, while all the time the words "mobilisation" and "deployment" were scrupulously avoided, with a view to giving the diplomats a free hand. Cadorna calculated on having the army prepared for any contingencies at the moment of the declaration of war.

It is conceivable that the Allies had high hopes as to the effect of Italy's entry into the war. Probably they believed that it would lead to a speedy decision of the contest. The joining up of a great nation with untapped and abundant resources was bound, of course, to produce tremendous psychological reactions on the various belligerents. Italy's pledge to take the side of the Allies was followed towards the end of April by a breathing space of four weeks. But during these four weeks two incidents occurred which made a great change in the prospects of the nation. The general impression in April, in consequence of the Carpathian battles, was that Italy, so to speak, had been invited to turn up for the dessert course of the victory banquet, but the break-through at Gorlice and the futile Dardanelles offensives showed only too plainly that the war was only just beginning, and that decidedly they could not as yet count definitely upon victory.

Cadorna had undertaken the "secret" deployment scheme not only with the intention of seizing the so ardently coveted "irredentist" territories by a surprise coup at the psychological moment agreed upon between him and the Government, but also with a view to being able to cope with a sudden offensive by Austria-Hungary the moment that war was declared. And yet the fear of such an offensive was really groundless in view of the position of affairs, as Cadorna knew full well. Austria-Hungary was at the moment engaged in a life and death struggle with Russia, and could not afford the luxury of keeping a strong offensive army in readiness for the hypothetical contingency of a declaration of war. The deployment of an offensive army which would be able to take position at the moment of the declaration of war, would, at any rate, need a considerable time. The theorist

Cadorna was so obsessed by the realisation that the lie of the Italian frontier was extremely unfavourable to him, that the menace of the South Tyrolean bastion oppressed him like a nightmare, while he did not take into account the difficulty the enemy would also encounter in negotiating it. Cadorna's theoretical fears increased when the Gorlice break-through, just before the entry of Italy into the war, made things considerably easier for Austria-Hungary. This disaster and the Dardanelles fiasco almost led to a crisis in Italy. The French saw that it was opportune to publish the fact that Italy was pledged to enter the war on May 23rd, with a view to stiffening the *morale* both of the Allies and their latest confederate. Incidentally, they did Austria-Hungary a very good turn by giving her a definite warning just in the nick of time.

Just like his "secret" mobilisation, Cadorna's plan of campaign was inspired by conflicting objectives. It was desired to occupy as speedily as might be by surprise coups the greatest possible areas of the irredentist provinces, while, theoretically at any rate, there was the risk of counter-surprise tactics on the part of the enemy. The instructions that were given breathed the spirit of Cadorna's twofold preoccupation. The troops were ordered to make a thrust towards the valley of the Drave, in order to cut off the shortest connecting line between South Tyrol and the Isonzo. Cadorna's main army was drawn up facing the Isonzo itself, with a view to securing definite possession of the river line, and then making a drive for Gorizia and Trieste. The task in South Tyrol, however, was confined to the establishment of as strong a line as possible. In this region lofty mountains and

the rear in order to make sure of his lines of communication. In this way he had tentatively experimented with his theory of surprise coups and seizure of territory.

When Cadorna became convinced in the beginning of June of the groundlessness of his fear of the South Tyrol menace, and when he had completed his mobilisation arrangements, he at length brought his reserves up to the Isonzo. And now a front line of something between thirty and forty kilometres was destined to be the theatre of bitter battles that went on for two years. In the middle of June the Italians advanced to the first Isonzo battle, in July the second battle commenced, in October the third, and in November the fourth. But they were all abortive. Two-thirds of the Italian army was concentrated on a narrow front. Cadorna concentrated his main attack during the first two battles on the Carso plains to the south of Gorizia, while in the two following ones his efforts were centred on the plain and hill at the bridge-head at Gorizia. Theoretically both points of attack had their advantages and drawbacks. In the Carso region one of his flanks was protected by the sea, while his troops had the Isonzo right in their rear. At Gorizia both flanks were more exposed, while the neighbourhood was more suitable for manœuvres. Cadorna tried, in accordance with his plan, to score a victory at both places. In the carrying out of his scheme his ineptitude as a leader was fully shown.

Cadorna had to decide between a surprise attack either on Gorizia or on the Carso. His troops were, in spite of their theoretical training, more or less powerless against the rather simple and makeshift defences of the enemy. They took every pill-box and dug-out to be a "fortress." Their artillery, too, was utterly incapable of coping with the task before it. They failed to counter the enemy's fire, and they also failed to storm his defences, and to distribute their own gun-fire efficiently. In accordance with Conrad's theory that all field movements should pivot from a central system of direction, their fire-control was conducted from headquarters. Consequently their artillery operations were clumsy, as proper range-finding was impossible. The infantry, intent on consolidating what was already won, did not

exploit to sufficient advantage the opportunities that lay in their way. Before it succeeded in entrenching itself in the position it had won, it was frequently hurled back by vigorous counter-offensives or by well-directed artillery fire. The tragedy of Cadorna's position lay in the fact that the enemy had consolidated his defence lines before the Italian army and its generals had acquired sufficient practical experience in the field at all. The Austro-Hungarians had been blasting through the rugged crags of the Carso sector for months and had built up a defence system that was almost impregnable. And *pari passu* with the development of this defence system the confidence and consciousness of strength of the defenders grew from day to day, while the attackers began to lose heart. This alone explains why Cadorna, in spite of the fact that his forces were double those of the enemy, and in spite of the steady improvement of his offensive methods, could make no headway against the defence that was put up.

In order to forestall a moral revulsion, engagements with minor objectives in view were staged for official report purposes, and any trivial advantage secured was exploited and magnified in the bulletins that were disseminated among the soldiers and the civilian population. This utterly dishonest way of temporary escape from a situation which was almost hopeless, was also very expensive and entailed a useless waste of human life, and led many subordinate officers to undertake "wild-cat" ventures merely through personal ambition. As a palliative for the malady that crippled the Italian army the effects of this quack nostrum were very ephemeral. The comparisons instituted between the blatantly garbled war bulletins of the Italians and the candid statements of the enemy, and between the confident hope of conquest with which Italy had started her campaign and the grim actualities of the war were extremely depressing. The tangible results of the entry of Italy into the war were so far negligible. It is very probable, however, that the Austro-Hungarian forces diverted to the Italian front contributed to giving a decisive turn to the campaign in the east, despite all the opportunities that had been neglected there. In the summer of 1915

there were about twenty Austrian divisions facing Italy and fifty in the east.

Cadorna, who personally had held very scant hopes with regard to the outcome of the first Isonzo battle, pointed out to the authorities its collapse as a reason for a considerable augmentation of the army for 1916. And when the advent of winter frustrated a fifth battle which had been planned, Cadorna decided to devote all his energies towards the overhauling of his forces. He felt a premonition that his reinforced and reorganised army would soon be put to a very severe test.

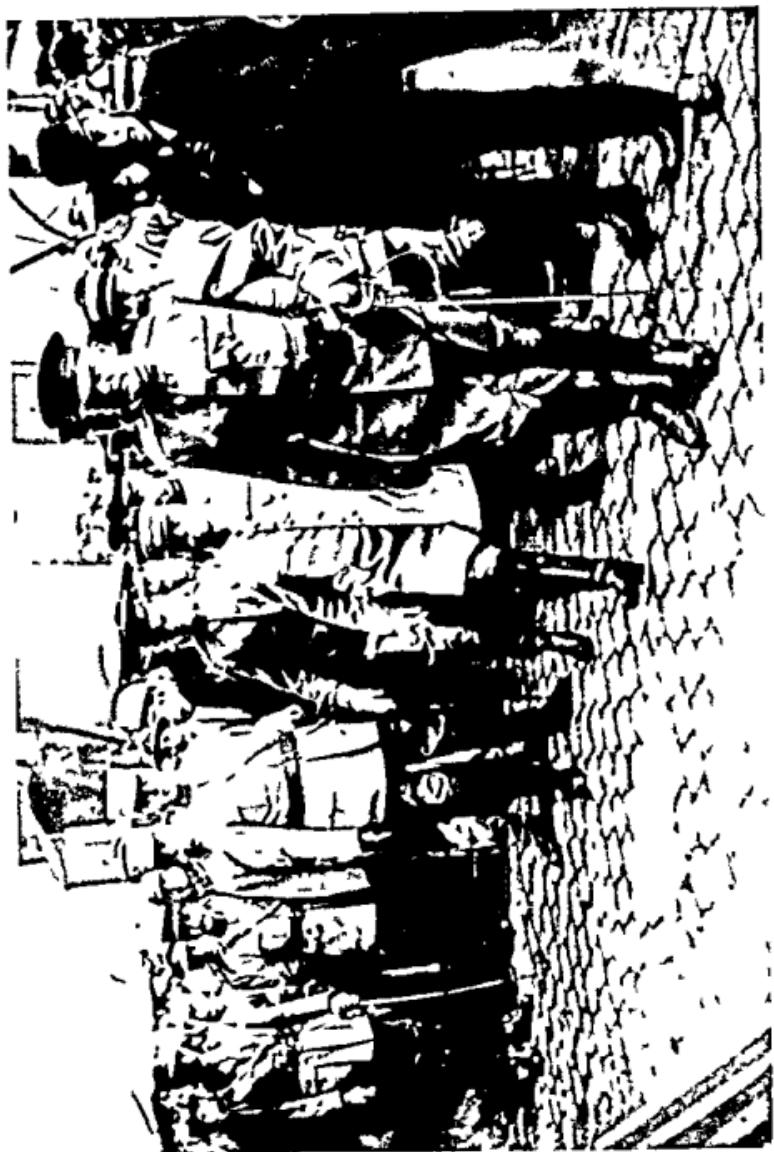
In the beginning of 1916 rumours were rife about an imminent Austro-Hungarian thrust from the South Tyrol against Venice. Cadorna's theoretical attitude which caused him to pay little heed in the beginning of the war to the garbled negative statements of the official bulletins made him now see far beyond the genuine positive reports and bulletins. He gave the menaced army instructions to be in readiness for a stout defensive, but barely five weeks before the opening of the offensive those instructions were marked with marginal notes pointing out the improbability of a strong attack by the enemy. Cadorna had underrated the ingenuity which the attackers showed in overcoming the tremendous obstacles caused by wretched rail and road facilities and the extremely difficult nature of the mountain regions in which they had to operate. He had also in his mind the Eastern Front, whose strength had been seriously undermined owing to the drain upon the German forces entailed by the Verdun campaign. And the upshot of it all was that Cadorna's theoretical calculations led him eventually to disbelieve the evidence of his own actual observations.

Though he had been secretly from the start rather dubious about the result, Cadorna started a fifth Isonzo battle in March, 1916. The *morale* of his troops, despite their winter rest, was at a low ebb. It was no easy task for Cadorna to induce his army to advance to the attack again and again at the selfsame spot against the selfsame enemy lines. Things had come to such a pass that he had to adopt very stringent disciplinary measures. Indeed, the fifth Isonzo battle, which had been undertaken

merely to relieve the strain on the French at Verdun, had proved the impregnable strength of the Isonzo defence. And it was just this very fact that confirmed Cadorna in his scepticism regarding the Austro-Hungarian offensive.

When the storm burst, Cadorna saw that his strongly embattled theoretical structure had collapsed. Mountain fastnesses and fortresses were captured in rapid succession, and things looked very grave for the Italians. But the dogged theorist stood the test of those crucial moments. He possessed that characteristic of the Italian, and of the Latin races generally, which makes imminent danger act on them as a tonic, instead of putting them in a panic. The miracle of the Marne in 1914 and the miracle of the Piave in 1917 are outstanding instances of this temperamental reaction. Cadorna, who proved himself the same expert transport organiser, who had so brilliantly managed the secret mobilisation scheme and the drafting of reinforcements, quickly saw the situation. He made arrangements so that just five days after the start of the offensive his forces were 25 per cent stronger in numbers than those of the enemy. Moreover, he evolved a plan which showed the brilliancy of conception of the battle theorist. He drew up his forces in mobile columns along the valleys leading to the plain. From the Isonzo, from Albania and Lybia, the troops converged on the valleys. Railways and motor-lorries brought along the drafts with surprising swiftness. And then as the attackers were debouching separately from the valleys on to the plains they were themselves attacked by fresh forces in superior numbers and hurled back into the mountains.

Meanwhile the Austro-Hungarian offensive proved abortive at every point. The army units had to be reorganised and prepared for a new attack, and the artillery had to be brought into fresh positions. It seemed very questionable whether the offensive forces would have completed their preparations before the exhausted defenders had established themselves satisfactorily in their new positions. But on this occasion the Russian offensive, which was the outcome of the appeal for help by the King of Italy, prevented the attackers from putting the issue to the test.



Imperial War Museum
GI VIRA PIRSHING, (front), THE COMMANDER OF THE AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE
AT THE DISSEMBARKING AT BONI OGNI, 11 JULY 1917

Cadorna soon decided to give up his attempts in Southern Tyrol, and having made up his mind on this point, he immediately put into practice all his methodical devices and tricks to camouflage his movements.

The entrenchments along the Isonzo were reinforced without the accompaniment of the wide publicity previously given to similar undertakings. With the greatest possible secrecy the divisions of the now superfluous mobile army in the Southern Tyrolean mountains were shifted to the Isonzo. Rumours about a counter-offensive in South Tyrol were cunningly disseminated. The spirits of the soldiers were considerably cheered by the recent defence which really was the first genuine successful enterprise in the war.

The sixth Isonzo battle started in August, 1916, when Gorizia was wrested from its defenders. This again was another victory that was not adequately followed up. The theory-obsessed commander considered that the new defensive positions of the enemy were not sufficiently well known to justify an assault on them. Cadorna made no effort to make a speedy and vigorous offensive before the enemy had again firmly entrenched himself. The result was that the defenders had ample opportunity to occupy the heights to the east of Gorizia.

From a military point of view Cadorna's victory was of no very great consequence. The little provincial town was only fifteen kilometres away from the frontier. This meant merely an advance of one kilometre per month since the war started. Moreover, possession of it was a very questionable advantage, inasmuch as the enemy occupied the heights commanding it. And this makes the moral effect of its capture all the more astounding. Clever propaganda had converted Gorizia into an impregnable fortress and into a town of world-wide fame. Its importance was emphasised all over the globe. Taken in connection with the simultaneous coups in the Brussilov offensive, and with the hold-up of the South Tyrol dash, the fall of Gorizia was seriously believed to herald the rapid disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian army. Gorizia gave the final impetus that pushed Roumania into the camp of the Allies. In fact, the Roumanians

were rather inclined to fear that their entry into the war was somewhat belated.

It is a curious historical paradox that the importance of Italy's performances in the war up to October, 1917, was in inverse ratio to their repercussions. Her mere neutrality had been a very important factor for the French during the Battle of the Marne. The hopes which the entry of Italy into the war aroused among the other Allies induced them to commit themselves in London to grant her extensive boundary concessions. This undertaking later barred the way towards a separate peace with Austria-Hungary and had the effect of keeping together that ramshackle empire when its heterogeneous constituent States were preparing to break away from it. Furthermore, Italian successes in 1915, trivial as they were, were probably instrumental in preventing the collapse of Russia. And then finally in 1916 the fall of Gorizia brought Roumania into the war. But even this does not end the long list of the reactions of the fall of Gorizia. Roumania's entry into the war had such a disastrous effect on German *morale* that an intensified submarine campaign was started, which in turn afforded America a pretext for lining up on the side of the Allies.

The Italian army had first gained fresh vigour and courage through the fall of Gorizia. Yet Cadorna was mistaken in his theory that the defenders were getting exhausted. Indeed, the Italian divisions were now more numerous and were better equipped than in 1915; furthermore, they were buoyed up by victory, and had recovered from the depression which had brooded over them in the previous autumn. And yet their enemy was still there confronting them and very firmly entrenched. For it must be remembered that Austria-Hungary had not faced any crisis on the Italian front like the one it had to face and overcome on the Eastern Front. And the truth of this fact was hammered home to Cadorna by the seventh, eighth and ninth Isonzo battles, which raged in a crescendo of fury simultaneously with the Brussilov offensives. The months of September, October and November in succession brought in their train a repetition of the dreadful carnage. With wearisome and

monotonous reiteration the main thrust was made at one time on the Carso sector and at another on Gorizia. An extension of the battle zone northwards along the middle reaches of the Isonzo was impossible with the means at Cadorna's disposal. The result of the assault on the heights to the east of Gorizia was practically negligible. Territory captured on the Carso was lost again as the result of counter-offensives. Incidentally those counter-offensives made it only too apparent that the *morale* of the troops was once more showing signs of deterioration. A considerable number of prisoners were lost, and the increase in the roll of deserters was becoming a serious problem. The soldiers were getting extremely sceptical regarding the ultimate outcome of the series of fiercely contested battles that for a year and a half had been waged on the same spot to no purpose. They were cynically contemptuous when anyone spoke to them of the capture of Gorizia.

Cadorna was an uncompromising opponent of the "attrition" system of fighting, which had been adopted so extensively by Joffre, Foch and Haig. He always strove to prevent battles sloughing away into what he considered a tedious, wasteful and for the most part futile method. Each individual battle consisted of a series of thrusts, punctuated by brief lulls with a view to preparing for the next drive. He held the view that the first onset produced the best results, while prolonged and tedious nibbling at the enemy not only entailed inordinate waste of human life, but made too exacting a demand on the *morale* of the troops. And it is solely owing to the fact that Cadorna had the strength of will to put this theory into practice that the period of anxious tension through which his army went in 1916 did not prove much more serious than it did. Even so his casualty lists were extremely heavy.

Cadorna was in a rather unpleasant fix during the winter of 1916-1917. His front ran close to the line of the Isonzo, a position very unfavourable for the contingency of a defence. His soldiers were exhausted and war-weary, and they were depressed by the apparent futility of their fighting. After the jubilation and war-fever of the summer months the bulk of the Italian

people had developed symptoms of apathy, which merged only too quickly first into ennui, and later in discontent and irritability. Disgruntled Radicals spread their evangel of defeatism and despair among the restless masses. The only hopeful feature in the gloom that settled on the nation was its reorganised and considerably reinforced army. And when one takes into account the great dearth of raw material of all kinds in Italy just then, one is amazed at the splendid supply of munitions of every kind and the splendid commissariat with which she equipped her troops for the resumption of the struggle.

The plan of campaign of the Allies for the spring of 1917 had visualised a new common offensive, a repetition of the autumn attacks of 1916. The Russian revolution and the German retreat in the west marred this programme. Cadorna was extremely uneasy about the way things had panned out. As far back as the autumn of 1915, when the offensive of the Central Powers was drawing to a close, and again in the late autumn of 1916, when Roumania was defeated, he had fancied that he saw the portents of an enemy offensive. Now in the spring of 1917, when he again talked about an imminent offensive, he naturally found that people were very incredulous, in view of his previous false alarms. And the very fact that his renewed fears of an offensive in the spring of 1917 proved groundless, was mainly responsible for the scant attention paid by the Allies to his warning of imminent danger in October, when that warning was justified.

The Italian Intelligence Department throughout the entire war was exceedingly wretchedly informed. The relative strength of the enemy was persistently overrated, and it was stated that Austro-Hungarian divisions were on the Isonzo which had never left the Eastern Front. But apart from the damage caused in October, 1917, through allied scepticism, prompted by the exaggerations of the Intelligence Department and the repeated Cassandra-like forebodings of Cadorna, these misstatements, both voluntary and involuntary, had another disastrous reaction.

In the spring of 1917, Cadorna, in co-operation with

Lloyd George, had pleaded hard to get eight divisions, composed of French and British troops, for Italy, in order to give a knock-out blow on the Isonzo to Austria-Hungary. They did not seem to take into consideration the fact that the Italian front was very easily accessible for Germany, while the Western Powers had only at their disposal the very inefficient Alpine railways. They had to calculate definitely upon the certainty that the enemy must promptly be aware of the eventual transport of troops from the Western Front, so that the Allies would gain absolutely no advantage over the Central Powers in the way of springing a surprise on them. As a matter of fact it took fully forty days in the autumn of 1917 for the eleven Franco-British divisions to muster up in Northern Italy. We can readily appreciate the objection of all the French and English generals to have any of the Western Front troops drafted to Italy, which virtually meant "shifting the Battle of the Somme to the Isonzo."

Cadorna's fears of a South Tyrol offensive were hardly calculated to induce the Western Powers to run the risk of having their divisions annihilated on the Isonzo. The Italian commander's mind was incurably obsessed with the dread of the attack from South Tyrol, a dread that was theoretically justifiable indeed, but which eventually had a paralysing effect on the war achievements of the Italian army. The irony of fate decreed that he did not foresee in time the one real menace which occurred in the spring of 1916, because he was too preoccupied with his theories to see facts even when they stared him in the face.

It would have had an extraordinary moral effect in 1917, on the other hand, had the Western Powers sent, say, one or two English and French divisions in exchange for Italian divisions. But the Western Powers, whose war psychology in every other respect was so shrewd, utterly lacked any appreciation of the great moral effect that would accrue from the interchange of fighting units by France, England, Italy and Russia. In a military sense they were as obtusely insensitive to the problems presented by coalition warfare, as they were alert to its diplomatic implications.

When Cadorna had satisfied himself regarding the baselessness of his fears about South Tyrol in the spring of 1917, and the Nivelle offensive was keeping the Germans busy, he issued instructions for his tenth battle. It lasted for four weeks, and raged simultaneously in front of Gorizia and on the Carso. The help sent by the Allies was limited to one hundred heavy guns, which they later increased to two hundred. In vain had Cadorna evolved some very brilliant variations of barrage and bombardment systems. The net result was very unsatisfactory. No progress was made at Gorizia apart from the capture of a few hills to the north of the town. On the Carso Cadorna made very good headway in the early stages of the battle, but in a counter-offensive the defenders recaptured in two days the ground that had been won after weeks of fighting. The number of prisoners taken was alarming. To make matters worse serious symptoms of loss of *morale* were once more very obvious.

Having organised a special speedy system for the transport of his troops, Cadorna staged his next offensive in the month of June in the South Tyrolean mountains. His efforts, however, at keeping his manœuvres secret, were a dismal failure. Long before the battle the enemy put up huge placards facing his front trench lines, with the following inscription in heavy characters : "Will the attack 'K' start soon ?" The Italian secret code taken for the offensive was "K." And new Italian reinforcements were "welcomed" before the attack, the names of individual regiments being also inscribed on placards placed right opposite their position in the trenches. Cadorna, who had hoped by changing the venue of battle to revive the drooping spirits of his divisions, realised that the macabre humour of the defenders had done a good deal towards frustrating his purpose. The offensive, which started on a seven-mile front, on which twelve divisions deployed, was a complete failure.

After the failure of his South Tyrol enterprise Cadorna's position was extremely critical. Defeatism was rife both among the civilian population and among the soldiers. The menacing symptoms which appeared almost simultaneously in the French army, combined with the Russian collapse, tended to make things look decidedly black for

the Allies. For a while the position in the French army was worse than that in the Italian army. The greatest menace to Italy, however, was the unrest among the civilian population.

One of the most curious phenomena of the Great War was the wave of pessimism that swept simultaneously over the commanders of all the armies in the winter of 1916 and the spring of 1917. The pessimism of the Central Powers led to the peace offer in December, 1916, and to the intensified submarine campaign. Among the Allies the general depression found vent in the slogan, "Never again a Somme battle," and in the appointment of Nivelle. And when Nivelle proved himself an utter failure, the spirits of the Allies slumped still further. The *morale* of the French, Italian and Russian armies had sunk very low, and the attitude of the army reacted on the civilian population in the three nations. And during those weeks the Central Powers had not recovered their poise despite the rumbling of the Russian Revolution. Their Intelligence departments, which never failed them in purely military domains, and which apprised them in advance of practically every attack and every movement of troops on the part of the enemy, proved utterly inadequate in the spheres of psychology and diplomacy. With the Allies the position was quite the reverse. They were constantly the victims of surprise tactics on all fronts, while, on the other hand, they were always able to appraise accurately the spirits and *morale* of their opponents. It was the unerring accuracy of the information supplied as to the psychology of the enemy, added to the moral buck given by America's declaration of war, that gave them the courage to weather the critical months in 1917. Among the Central Powers there was no military activity during the months when three of their four main opponents were utterly prostrated, and it was during those months, too, that the peace feelers were thrown out by the Emperor Charles and that the Reichstag passed its Peace Resolution. If the German Intelligence Department had shown more subtle psychological and diplomatic acumen while the military *morale* among the Allies was at such a low ebb, the tragedy of the end of the Great War might have been reversed.

Indeed, during the whole course of the Great War the successes of the Central Powers and the failures of the Allies were in the military sphere, while the reverse was the case with both in political and psychological spheres.

The eleventh Isonzo battle was on a larger scale, and was more fiercely contested than any of its predecessors. At the outset it was the urgent request of the Allies that made Cadorna start this desperate engagement. The more the French insisted that their own army should have a prolonged holiday, the more eager they were to urge on the British and Italians to fight. But apart from this, Italy itself was demanding that its troops should start about staging a successful offensive. While Foch and Pétain were gingering up Haig and Wilson to secure a tangible victory Cadorna too had to do his utmost to show results that would reassure his own people.

The only tangible result that Cadorna had secured by his eleventh battle was the capture of Gorizia, when he suddenly shifted the base of his offensive from South Tyrol to the Isonzo, and to a certain extent had managed to outwit the enemy and elude their espionage system. While hitherto his choice just lay between Gorizia and the Carso, he now decided to apply his surprise tactics of 1916 on a grander and more decisive scale. His entire forces were fully equipped and ready for battle. All fronts extending from the Ortler along the South Tyrol salient and Carinthia as far as the Upper Isonzo totalled a length of 270 miles, and had their forces thinned down to the irreducible minimum with a view to reinforcing to the utmost the zone of the offensive, which was forty-four miles in length. Cadorna felt that he could definitely rely on the truth of his theory that the defenders who must be prepared to hold up an offensive at any point on their front, could not have the same elasticity as he had in the disposition of troops. Added to this was the fact that the enemy's lines of communication were longer and less favourable than his. In this way Cadorna massed sufficient troops to make an offensive not only at the Carso and at Gorizia, but also further north on the middle reaches of the Isonzo.

In consequence of this the defenders had at no part

along the front more than their normal forces in all previous battles, i.e. just one-half of their opponent's strength. They had two courses open to them. They must either content themselves with a front which was weak at every point, or, alternatively, they could concentrate on Gorizia and the Carso, and thin out their forces as much as was compatible with comparative safety on the middle reaches of the Isonzo, on which they did not lay so much stress. Cadorna's theory, which had visualised the possibility of these manœuvres on the part of the defenders, worked out perfectly. Furthermore, the preparations for crossing the river at its middle reaches were carried out with all possible secrecy, with a view to springing the offensive on this hitherto absolutely quiet spot as an absolute surprise. The leader of this offensive, General Capello, was the same man who had conducted the successful attack on Gorizia in August, 1916.

The battle raged in a series of fierce drives on the Carso and at Gorizia. All the assaults and thrusts of the Italians were ineffectual, while they entailed terrible loss of life. The toll of dead and wounded in this battle exceeded that of any individual Russian engagement, and was only equalled on one occasion on the Western Front. That was during the severest month of the Flanders battle in 1917 when the British losses were appalling. The defenders were held up at Gorizia and the Carso by reckless expenditure of human life. Meanwhile the Italians crossed the middle reaches of the Isonzo under the cover of a smoke screen. And here the defenders had to fall back at last before the pressure of the infinitely stronger enemy. Meanwhile reinforcements arrived from the Eastern Front. Cadorna strove in vain by bringing up Carso troops to follow up his success. After four weeks the battle ended in the beginning of September. Cadorna knew how to exploit his victory for home consumption. An Italian cabinet minister sent him the following telegram: "The victory has saved our fatherland."

In spite of this partial victory the net result of the eleven Isonzo battles was the same as that gained by Haig in the Flanders battles. Cadorna, not like Haig, did not succeed with his qualified attrition tactics, while, on the other hand, they considerably sapped the strength

of his own forces. Although on principle he abhorred attrition methods and avoided them, the effect of his strategic system of a series of sledge-hammer blows was equally wasteful. The Italian army could not be expected year after year to carry out a series of apparently more or less abortive offensives without collapsing even before the defenders had reached the stage of exhaustion.

After his eleventh battle, Cadorna was very intent on engaging in a twelfth battle in order to follow up his quasi-victory. He had already issued all the necessary instructions for it, and preparations were going well ahead, when news came along of an impending offensive by the enemy. It was now September 18th, and with great promptitude Cadorna cancelled all his plans for an offensive, and made arrangements for a defence. The English and French countered this decision by immediately taking back their two hundred heavy guns, on the ground that "they were superfluous, as they were not being used." It was the irony of fate that the attack, which Cadorna expected and against which he took all possible precautionary methods, proved successful.

It was indeed no trivial task to realign on a defensive basis a mighty offensive host of 53 divisions and 3600 guns. The entire system of infantry positions and the emplacement of artillery had to be reorganised. Furthermore, sharp differences of opinion developed between Cadorna and the local commander Capello, who had contributed substantially to the success of the eleventh battle. Capello was in favour of a counter-offensive, either while the enemy was preparing for his offensive, or immediately after he had started it. Cadorna was opposed to this scheme. In the eleventh battle yet once again, new symptoms of defeatism and war-weariness had been in evidence, especially at Gorizia and on the Carso. Consequently Cadorna could not and would not undertake the responsibility of a counter-offensive, as, after all his bitter experience, he thought it undoubtedly entailed possibilities of turning out a failure. And such a failure might deprive the army of what little prestige it had regained only recently after its partial success.

The clash of opinions between himself and Capello had

the effect of making the realignment from offensive to defensive position more difficult and slower. Furthermore, it was impossible from the many contradictory reports that came in, to ascertain approximately the date and place of the projected enemy offensive. However, even after the enemy had been reinforced by German and Austro-Hungarian reserves, the Italian army's numerical superiority to it was sufficient to warrant an adequate defence at any point. From the source of the Isonzo to the sea 53 Italian divisions faced 28 Austro-Hungarian and 7 German divisions. Even at the actual spot where the breach was effected, there were 180 Italian battalions against Austro-Hungarian and German ones. Most decidedly Cadorna had, theoretically anyhow, adopted all conceivable measures for repelling the offensive.

If the break-through on the upper reaches of the Isonzo on October 24th brought in its train splendid results to an extent that was utterly beyond the scope not only of Cadorna's theoretical calculations, but of those of the attacker, it was all the outcome of the shattered *morale* of the troops. It was also due to the errors and procrastination of the generals, and especially of Caporetto, partly owing to the fact that they had no experience of defensive tactics, and partly because they did not pull together with energy and unanimity.

Each of the first four days of the offensive saw the collapse of one of the defensive lines which Cadorna had drawn up. In the afternoon of the fourth day the road to the Venetian plain was open to the enemy. At the last moment Cadorna ordered the retreat of the troops from Gorizia and from the Carso. The sluggishness of the pursuit gave an opportunity for saving the divisions in those places, who were in the gravest danger of being driven back to the Tagliamento and the sea. It was only by sacrificing those troops whom he pitted against the attackers, that Cadorna succeeded in securing the withdrawal of the main body of his army. A week after the beginning of the disaster, when the Italians halted on the western bank of the Tagliamento, they had lost hundreds of thousands of prisoners, thousands of guns and enormous supplies of munitions and military stores of all kinds.

Though the phase of acute danger had passed, Cadorna

had slender hopes of holding the Tagliamento line. As a matter of fact he had already made all the necessary preparations for a retreat behind the Piave. It was after he had taken his stand at the Tagliamento that Foch turned up. The French commander was rather dogmatic in tone and somewhat too quick in jumping to conclusions, and he jarred on Cadorna's self-esteem. The Italian general declined to be hectored and lectured, and the result of their conference was very unsatisfactory.

When the Austro-Hungarian troops crossed the upper reaches of the Tagliamento, Cadorna, after a tentative attempt at a defence, gave orders to fall back behind the Piave. He had definitely made up his mind to take his final stand at that river. He sent a despatch to the Government stating that he was going to play his last card. A further retreat, he said, would cut off the South Tyrol front, utterly ruin the *morale* of the army and entail the loss of all his artillery. "While this further retreat," he added, "would bring definite disaster in its train, there is just a chance of putting up a stand to the very last on the Piave, and I shall put it up, cost what it may." The theorist commander had decided that his defence line along this river would be short enough to permit the withdrawal of any divisions that were utterly unfit for battle.

People talk of the miracle of the Marne; the miracle of the Piave was far more astounding. An army that in the course of two weeks had lost a quarter of a million prisoners and nearly half of its artillery, and whose *morale* was utterly shattered, shook off its attitude of defeatism overnight, so to speak, and depending solely on its own sadly depleted resources, pulled up taut and defiant against the onrushing, victorious foe. The rally of the French at the Marne was less dramatic and abrupt; there the enemy, after a series of blunders, voluntarily quitted the field. The Italians, on the other hand, had to repel terrific onsets for weeks. Consequently the Piave stand was infinitely more heroic than that on the Marne, while, of course, the effects of the latter were, admittedly, infinitely more far-reaching. At the decisive moment fate compensated Cadorna for many disasters and disappointments.

On the day that he reached the Piave, Cadorna was relieved of his command. But he had done his share theoretically, practically and morally, in planning the famous stand on the Piave, and he left his successor to finish the job.

DIAZ—THE CAUTIOUS

DIAZ was another of the numerous generals of the Great War who were raised to their high rank with startling suddenness. The circumstances were dramatic that led to his appointment by the Government. His case was somewhat analogous to that of Nivelle and Arz.

Diaz was a Southern Italian, the exact antithesis of the Piedmontese Cadorna. While the latter was austere, cold and aloof, Diaz was, as Mussolini said in his funeral oration over him, a humane and kind-hearted commander, who did not look upon soldiers as mere pawns on a chessboard. In contrast to the speculative theorist, Cadorna, Diaz was an intensely practical man. He resembled Pétain in his ingenuity in using to the utmost tactical advantage all the appliances of modern warfare. They both also were, above all things, extremely cautious and prudent in drawing up their plans, and neither would voluntarily undertake any avoidable risk or leave anything to chance. This extreme cautiousness on the part of Diaz was an excellent asset in a general who was at the head of an army that had just suffered one of the greatest reverses recorded in the war, and that after a precipitate retreat was now making a desperate stand with the River Piave between it and its triumphant pursuers.

On November 8th Diaz took over charge of the army. The defence foundations already arranged between the Piave and the Brenta by Cadorna were quite adequate to hold up the first rather makeshift offensives of the enemy, who as yet was rather short of artillery and reserves. Foch and Wilson were rather dubious about the ability of Diaz to hold the Piave, and gave instructions that the allied divisions should be drawn up at a

considerable distance behind the fighting line. This meant that they were absolutely useless to Diaz, and that he stood completely alone in a most perilous and critical moment. However, he proved himself fully competent to complete the heroic task that Cadorna had begun. Attack after attack by Austro-Hungarian and sometimes by German divisions were repelled. The Italian army had completely recovered its *morale*, and showed indomitable courage and tenacity during the perilous crisis through which it was passing. And its courage and tenacity were rewarded. It is no exaggeration to say that the victory wrested by the Italian army in the battle that raged between the Adige and the sea was the greatest and most glorious during the whole course of the war.

While the battle was in progress Diaz had begun the rather difficult job of reorganising the army. When the danger was over, he set about the task in thorough earnest. He had utterly different views from those of his predecessor on this point. He deprecated any kind of tactics that tended to reckless waste of human life or war material, and he absolutely forbade his subordinates to undertake engagements for merely trivial or spectacular objectives. He did away with the training of "picked troops," as he contended that they sapped the vitality of the army.

In the beginning of the new year six of the eleven British and French divisions departed for the Western Front. Two Italian divisions accompanied them.

About this time the British and the French started bringing pressure to bear upon the Italians to resume the offensive. They were, of course, unaware of the difficulties with which the Italians had to contend. Diaz turned a deaf ear to their importunities. He knew that he dare not expose the army to the risk of a defeat just then. A fresh repulse or even an abortive offensive would spell irreparable ruin. He felt that he was just strong enough to assume a sturdy defence. Beyond that, he could not and would not go.

In the middle of June, 1918, the Austro-Hungarian army opened an offensive. Diaz had been well informed

about their intentions, and had made ample preparations for his defence in the mountains. They were strongly entrenched, and they had ample reserves which made effective counter-thrusts at the attackers. Among those who fought in this battle were the French and English units that remained in Italy. His definite victory in this region enabled Diaz to send troops to support the hard-pressed defenders of the Piave. In contrast to the enemy he was able to despatch troops speedily along the entire front. After ten days the Austro-Hungarian offensive was absolutely finished.

The great offensive which started on September 25th on the Western Front, the peace negotiations that followed it, and the collapse of Bulgaria had far-reaching repercussions on the position of Diaz. Not only was it impossible henceforth for Germany to come to the aid of Austria-Hungary, but the mere fact of the negotiations for a truce was unquestionable proof of the extreme weakness of the enemy. The decisive moment had come at last. The danger now seemed to be that the war would come to an end and that at the finish the Italians would still be standing on the Piave. The history of the years 1859 and 1866 would be repeated, when Italy had extended her territory with foreign help and thereby injured her own prestige at home and abroad. These considerations made Diaz decide that a final offensive was now absolutely imperative.

It was quite natural that he should regard with more scepticism than others the rumours which had been rife for a long time about the internal disintegration of Austria-Hungary, inasmuch as at the front he had only to deal with the Dual Monarchy's army, which, despite hunger and sickness, presented a picture that in no wise reflected the hopeless chaos and defeatism of the heterogeneous state itself. From the moment of the armistice negotiations, however, the situation assumed quite a different perspective in the eyes of Diaz. Only his congenital ultra-cautious disposition prevented him from starting an offensive forthwith. After the lapse of eleven days, however, the joint pressure of the Italian Cabinet and the urgency of the politico-military situation forced him to take action. And even so he had to thank the

enemy that his action was not belated, owing to the fact that Arz was debarred by the diplomats from taking a hand in the Armistice negotiations.

Nevertheless, the ultra-cautiousness of Diaz in hanging fire was destined to do a great deal of damage to Italy's prestige. The manifesto which had been issued by the Emperor Charles just before the opening of the offensive deprived the Italian victory of much of its glamour. It made it clear to everybody that Diaz had triumphed over an opponent who really no longer existed.

The preparations that had been made for a common attack by the Italian army and its auxiliary troops were by no means very well planned. There was a marked lack of co-ordination. Despite the great superiority of the offensive forces, it was clear once again that Diaz had not been absolutely unjustified in his delay in starting the new offensive. In the battle which raged for a week in the mountains, the Austro-Hungarians put up a sturdy stand, despite the fact that the Italians had the assistance of the French. The attackers were in an extremely critical position for days on the river, until at length, led by the British, they made a break through.

During the Armistice negotiations Diaz stood out for extremely stringent conditions, in order to make any further resistance impossible, and to ensure the finality of the victory. He also put forward a great scheme for following up the fight against Germany, should it be necessary. He offered for this purpose the unreserved support of his army, and evolved far-reaching plans to invade Bavaria and Saxony. His scheme might be considered quixotic or wild-cat by many, but, at any rate, it was a grand final gesture by a land which was very rightly sensitive about its military prestige. Typical too of Italy's anxiety to stand well in the eyes of her allies and also to secure tangible proof of her final victory, was the huge number of prisoners taken on the last day of the last battle.

All Italy's dreams came true, and she left the battle-field with flying colours. And for this satisfactory finale the cautious and shrewd Diaz was mainly responsible.

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It was his careful patient work in reorganising the army, and his conversion of disaster into success at the Piave more than his final October victory, that won him the place that he holds in the memory of his fellow-countrymen.

PERSHING—THE MAN OF IRON

THE American Government, President Wilson and the United States Secretary for War, Mr. Baker, had in April, 1917, after the declaration of war, to consider the appointment of the commander-in-chief of the expeditionary army. Their choice fell, not on the senior general, but on the seventh on the list, the fifty-four-year-old John Pershing. He had just recently successfully commanded the punitive expedition against the Mexican insurgents, and he had previously had military experience in the Philippines and as an observer of the Russo-Japanese War. Particularly in Mexico his firmness and his energy, as well as his ability, had been outstanding. Left to his own resources in very critical emergencies in that turbulent country, he displayed determination and independence in dealing with dangerous and difficult problems. Moreover, Pershing was a genuinely patriotic citizen, and—an important point in America—utterly devoid of political ambition. His impressive appearance, his previous, though only brief residence in France and Germany, his great self-confidence, his keen, resolute manner, marked him out as an ideal leader for the army which was yet to be brought into being, and as a representative of the mighty nation that was destined to alter the issue of the war.

Pershing was taken quite by surprise at his appointment, but nevertheless he hurried off quickly with his staff to Europe—a commander-in-chief without an army. He was welcomed in London with warmth, in Paris with frenzied applause. He was a friend to England—a saviour to France. The arrival of the new ally was the occasion of a national festival, and was accompanied by the most enthusiastic demonstrations. This was not merely clever play-acting by the French Government, in order to provide both a tonic for the *morale* of the people

which had been badly shaken by the Nivelle offensive and an antidote to the simmering symptoms of revolt ; it was also an expression of genuine gratification in the feeling that America would virtually take Russia's place and guarantee victory just when things looked blackest. And it was a very well-timed ovation to the man who was to decide at what spot and in what units mighty America would send her army of millions to the battlefields.

It was no light task for Pershing amid the welter of claims and counter-claims to form a clear idea of his future activities ; a still harder task was to attain his goal once he had marked it out. Countless obstacles beset his path. He had to reckon with obstacles from home, obstacles from his own army, from the enemy and even from his own allies. By strength of will, sheer energy and grim tenacity Pershing overcame all these difficulties, and thereby rendered invaluable service alike to his country and to the campaign he had undertaken. He had aimed at the start at assembling by a given date an enormous independent American army in its own colossal camping-ground. For every detail of this programme he had to fight with no less vehemence than he showed in battle. And when he had completed his programme he had won his first great victory by sheer strength of will, and then set about his second task—the attack on the enemy.

Demonstrations of friendship towards America and towards Pershing had begun with the arrival of the first drafts, and ended only a few weeks before the conclusion of the war. The American soldiers as well as Pershing himself and his Government had, from the very start, despite the ties of race and language that bound them to England, a strong affection for France on psychological grounds, the outcome both of the traditions of the War of Independence and of a feeling that they were the protectors of a weaker nation which had been ruthlessly laid waste by its big bullying neighbour. This sentimental link no doubt had a great deal to do with the decision as to whether the American army should support the English or the French lines. Practical considerations, however, weighed most with the iron-willed Pershing in this question. It was vital that the English should defend the

seaboard and the Channel Ports, and that the French, of course, should protect Paris. Consequently there remained for the Americans just the section of the Western Front from Rheims to the east—especially the Verdun area. A decisive blow would probably be aimed at Verdun on account of the menace it held to the lines of retreat and reinforcement for the German army. Moreover, linked with this portion of the front were the railways and main-roads leading to the Mediterranean ports. These arteries, which were available, if necessary, for retreating *en masse*, had so far not been used at all by the English, and very little by the French. Pershing considered that the rear of the British lines, owing to the comparative proximity of the sea, was rather dangerous, and the space there available was too narrow for the American base. Accordingly it was fixed at the region assigned to them at the front, as it afforded all the requisite advantages, i.e. safety, a splendid strategic position for an attack and space for independent manœuvring. The American view on this point had the thorough approval of Pétain, Foch and Haig. But at this juncture Pershing's plan of campaign was just a dream of the future. So far there were no American soldiers.

After the first enthusiasm had died down, the Allies began to get a bit restive, especially the "doctrinaire soldiers" among them, who had expected that the entrance of America into the battle-field would be much quicker and on a much larger scale. The Allies watched Pershing's purposeful work on the construction of his lines of communication, which followed immediately after the American scheme had been drawn up, at first with indifference, later on, as their compass became known, with doubt, and in the anxious days early in 1918, almost with indignation. All this made no impression on the iron-willed Pershing, who proceeded ahead with his colossal transport equipment. Gigantic cranes were kept busy at French docks unloading material for the construction of sheds, field-hospitals, officers' headquarters, shops, saw-mills, armouries, motor-works and smithies. In short, a tract of France was for the time being converted into a hub of American industrial activity. American locomotives and railway-carriages,

manned by Americans, fetched in a few months material for the erection of the colossal range of structures that were to house an army of 2,000,000 men at a distance of some 8000 miles from their native land. Pershing had to fight with grim determination against the red-tapism both of municipal and departmental French officialdom which tried to trip him up, and quietly but definitely snubbed it. He had to fight against the imperfections and limitations of the American authorities who for a long time looked upon his plans as too colossal and frequently deliberately misinterpreted them, and who during the long dreary months regarded his scheme for the enrolling of an army of 2,000,000 men as a bad joke. He had to fight against the shortage of shipping facilities, which hampered the transport of men and material to an exasperating extent. He had to fight against the anxiety of the French civilian population, caused by the rise in the cost of living owing to the purchase of foodstuffs by Americans, who, they complained, utterly disregarded the needs of the natives. Against all these worries, great and petty, Pershing had to fight—and fight stubbornly. He called to his aid American industrial potentates and directors of big commercial organisations of all branches, gave them the rank of colonels and generals, and exploited their business acumen, always taking care to retain for himself supreme authority over the tasks allotted to them. He remained in constant telegraphic communication with America; he carried on negotiations with the French Government, and he was ruthless in dismissing incompetent people. He refused to let anyone else control the transport problem. He fully believed that it was a job that he was competent to tackle himself. He knew that it was just as important a department as strategy and tactics. His iron will had its way in this matter too.

early in 1918 had frayed their nerves to such an extent that the reaction was very serious for the American soldiers, who were openly insulted and sneered at as a pack of busybodies who were prolonging the war.

From the outset Pershing favoured the utilising of the troops not only in trench warfare but also in the warfare of movement. He emphasised the view again and again that the fate of the war must be decided in a campaign of manœuvre, and that consequently this branch of a soldier's training was the most important. In America, where the successive heads of the War Department were strongly influenced by the divergent views of the military emissaries from the Allies, he found little support for his theory. It was only in the training camps in France which were under his control that he could endeavour to disseminate his views about battle tactics. It is very difficult to decide even now, after weighing all the evidence, whether Pershing, who described the Allies as "just wretched skirmishers," was really wise in his system of fighting, and whether the relatively very heavy casualty lists among American soldiers were to be attributed to lack of experience or to the too intensive development of the warfare of movement. It was partly owing to the fundamental difference in his views on military tactics from those of the Allies, and partly also for the sake of the *morale* of his troops that, as time went on, he staffed his training camps exclusively with American officers. He constantly but firmly declined all offers, especially those made by the French, to assist him in training his men.

With great shrewdness he gave ample facilities to the various organisations that aimed at the spiritual uplift and the moral welfare of the soldiers—the Red Cross, the Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A., the Salvation Army and clergymen of all denominations.

His greatest difficulty, naturally, was the establishment of an efficient Officers' Training Corps. The skeleton peace-time American army gave scant scope both in numbers and in quality for building up such a corps. When war was declared there were scarcely a dozen men in America who had commanded higher units than regiments. In this sphere Pershing, patterning himself

on the English and French precedents, was triumphantly successful. Relatively speaking, he even beat the English record in the training of efficient temporary officers. This was due as much to his ruthless sternness in combing out the inefficient as in utilising the experiences of his Allies. He insisted that difficult and dangerous jobs should be entrusted only to young officers of grit and character, and, as far as possible, he would have no divisional commander over the age of forty-five.

Difficult as had been Pershing's fight to have his own battle sector, he had a more difficult task in insisting on his American system of training. But most difficult was his prolonged and successful struggle for an independent American army. This struggle started when Americans began to land in large numbers in the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918, and when simultaneously the decline in man-power became more pronounced among the Allies. The English saw themselves forced in the beginning of 1918 to reduce the strength of their infantry by one-fourth, while even before that date the French had to do likewise. There was scant hope of an increase in their reserve for the 1918 campaigns. The prospect of disbanding many units loomed ahead. This led to an agitation among the Allies for the enrolment of American battalions in their divisions—an agitation which both Powers carried on by all available means and with untiring vehemence through their consuls in London, Paris and Washington, by pressure on Pershing himself and his colleagues, and, finally, by personal appeals to all military and political leaders in America. Their arguments appeared to be perfectly logical and fair. They pointed out that the Allied armies were no longer able to keep up their fighting units at full strength, while the Americans were not sufficiently trained to form



Imperial War Museums

THE KAISER TALKING TO INULER PASHA ON BOARD THE GOEBEL AT CONSTANTINOPLE

fought so well under a foreign flag as under his own, and that the reaction on the *morale* of his men from incorporation among the war-weary Allied divisions would be injurious, that, furthermore, in the assignment of more or less dangerous tasks to American soldiers by foreign officers friction and discontent were bound to develop, and finally, that this form of support would inevitably induce the Allies, and especially the English, whose man-power was less exhausted than that of the French, to spare their own soldiers at the expense of the Americans. How shrewd was his view may be gauged from the fact that both the English and French until the end of the war, had to strain their resources to the very uttermost to keep their fighting units on a bare war footing. Had Pershing not put up such a stubborn opposition to the incorporation of his men among French and English divisions, a great independent American army would never have come into being. And it is almost incredible how fiercely Pershing fought, and fought almost single-handed, to gain his point. And eventually the iron-willed general had his way.

These appeals by the Allies to America were most insistent between March and May, 1918, when the great German offensive was at its worst. In the beginning of June, 1918, the premiers of the Allies sent with Pershing's approval an appeal to President Wilson to send an army of 4,000,000 to France. At the same time the Allies asked Pershing flatly whether he would accept the responsibility for the loss of the war by his refusal to incorporate American troops in their divisions. Even this direct personal appeal had no effect on Pershing.

Towards the end of March, 1918, the English made an arrangement with Washington that for the future only American infantry without artillery, aeroplanes, machine-guns and baggage should be brought over the ocean. Only on these conditions, they pointed out, could they guarantee to co-operate in giving adequate shipping facilities for the transport of the American army. They thought that by this dexterous manœuvre Pershing would be thwarted in his effort to establish a colossal all-American army, and, at the same time, large numbers of American troops would be available at an earlier date.

But Pershing refused alike to be side-tracked from his original purpose by this manœuvre and by the plausible suggestion that, if ever-increasing numbers of American battalions continued to be incorporated in the divisions of the allied armies, the latter would eventually become inevitably "Americanised," and be under his control. Pershing never gave up his persistent dogged fight for the formation and equipment of exclusive American divisions, and insisted that, if he did not ship artillery and other munitions of war from America, they should be supplied to him steadily by the Allies as they were required. The crews he would supply himself, he said. On these issues too, after a tough fight, he had his way.

Owing to Pershing's untiring energy there was a fine army of American divisions ready for action when the third German offensive on the Marne front began. They were pitted against the Germans, withstood the first fierce onset, and acquitted themselves well. A few of them had already undergone the experience of manning trenches along a quiet front. And now that the first great step had been taken, Pershing was anxious that the American divisions which were scattered along very different parts of the Western Front, should be united in one solid army as soon as possible. Already corps commandos had been formed. Owing to the pressing strategic exigencies nothing more was possible at the moment. The third German offensive on the Marne had been broken, but there was the menace of a fourth, and even of a fifth attack.

Stubborn as had been Pershing's fight against the splitting up of his divisions into stop-gap battalions for the Allies, he fought even more stubbornly from the date of his arrival in Europe for the appointment of a unified command along the entire Western Front. This explains his thorough appreciation of, and cordial co-operation with, Foch's arrangements during the anxious period of June and July, 1918. During those momentous weeks he carefully and conscientiously carried out the instructions of the Commander-in-Chief with regard to the placing of his divisions. And in the meantime he did his very utmost to bring about co-operation among all the allied forces with regard to reinforcements and other matters.

In the middle of July, in the second Battle of the Marne, seven American divisions held the front line at its most dangerous point, while the others were stationed along quiet sectors. In the Marne sector the American troops again and again made greater advances than the exhausted and more cautious French soldiers on their flanks. This battle gave ample proof of their mobility under heavy fire. Their losses, of course, were very heavy; they underwent, like all young soldiers, a terrible baptism of blood. But by their heroism they had focussed on themselves the attention of all combatants along the Western Front. Pershing had succeeded in his ambition that American divisions should play a decisive part in a supremely decisive crisis of the war.

The emergence of these young soldiers in the first great battle marked a milestone in the history of the last year of the war. All, friends and foes alike, knew that they were the vanguard of millions coming from a young and virile continent. The moral reaction, above all, was immense. But neither the moral nor the tactical effect would have been the same had they gone into the fight in battalions scattered among the allied divisions. The idea was seriously considered of forming an American army of the divisions which extended from the Marne to the Vesle. Pershing fell in with this suggestion, as he believed that thereby his ultimate goal would be attained.

In August things began to lapse into stalemate again. A change in tactics was being canvassed. Foch, freed for the moment from his most pressing anxieties, concurred in a half-hearted way with Pershing's "side-show" attack at St. Mihiel planned for the beginning of September. Pershing had even more ambitious views. He made up his mind to carry out the attack for two reasons. It was to be the first great independent blow struck by his army, and the straightening out of the curve on this sector would pave the way for the great attack which was to start from Verdun—an attack which he had dreamt of since he was appointed commander—an attack which he had arranged since July 17th, and for which he had laid out his plans most carefully.

Exhaustive preparations were made for the attack on the St. Mihiel salient. Pershing was determined that this great attack must not fail, both for the sake of the *morale* of his own troops and with a view to upholding the status of the American higher command among the Allies. His forces at this section were double those of his opponents. Troops were detailed for diversion manœuvres to put the enemy on the wrong trail. Bogus orders, which were astutely conveyed to the Germans, were circulated. Finally there were impromptu night marches. All Pershing's manœuvres for the attack were adroitly and cunningly drawn up. And then at the last moment Foch placed difficulties in his way. Pershing very rightly stood out for his scheme, preparations for which were well under way. He pointed out that Foch's change of view was rather belated. The French commander-in-chief was again fully bent on splitting up the American army. Sensing his attitude, Pershing, who had been the most ardent advocate of a unified command, boldly refused to comply. He saw only too clearly that the motives that prompted Foch's sudden change of attitude were less strategic than political. The Allies, it was only too plain to him, did not want a great united American army. It would only make for strengthening American prestige, with the result that when peace came, its terms would be too much diluted with American influence.

shelving of a unified American army as a chumera. But Pershing forthwith refused to recognise Foch's right to interfere with the tactical manœuvres of his army

The attack on the St. Mihiel salient was, owing to the relative superiority in strength of the Americans, bound to be successful, but its moral effect on the young troops was splendid. It proved their self-reliance. Their inborn independence of spirit asserted itself with greater confidence. The headquarters staff was able to settle down to its important task with assurance and without undue flurry. Pershing remarked ironically that the French had given him two volumes of instructions regarding the defence and the attack, while he just drew up a few pages of directions for his officers.

The successful attack saved Verdun from the menace of being cut off by the enemy, and the chain of French forts on the eastern frontier was once more intact. Metz was just in front of the American troops. Pershing succeeded in his undertaking to swing round his men after they had finished their job exactly within the time allotted, and to fix his new line of attack to the north of Verdun. The whole thing worked like clockwork. Once more he showed his great organising ability to the very best effect.

On September 26th, 1918, a general attack on the German positions was made by Pershing in conjunction with the generals of the allied forces. The Meuse-Argonne fight raged in three separate sections right up to the Armistice. Again and again the Americans rushed to the attack and hurled back the German and Austro-Hungarian divisions from position to position.

After a very brief preliminary artillery bombardment, often without a covering fire at all, Pershing's soldiers, contemptuous of death, stormed trench after trench. Again and again they drove deep wedges into the heavily entrenched German positions through sheer reckless impetuosity and superiority in numbers. Their losses were appallingly heavy. Incredible as it may seem, just at this very juncture, owing to the speeding-up of infantry drafts within recent months, there was a very pronounced, though temporary shortage of trained troops in America. Staking everything on the battle, Pershing,

who had proudly watched the formation of division after division, incorporated six of those which were held in reserve, among his thirty battle divisions. And even so he had to reduce their strength to one-fifth. All through October his army kept hammering ceaselessly at the enemy. He aimed not at taking trench after trench, but at breaking through the German lines. He wanted to round up the entire enemy forces on the Western Front and to crush them. This had been his objective ever since he started the fight at Verdun. But this final goal for which Pershing, in contrast to Foch, aimed, was the only one which the grim man was destined never to attain. The toll of blood, which he relentlessly exacted from his army in order to attain his objective, was not paid in vain, however. It is true that after a while the American soldiers no longer dashed forward recklessly with songs and loud cheers against the German lines, as they did at St. Mihiel. They realised from very bitter experience what a stubborn and disciplined foe they had to tackle, and what a heavy price had to be paid for dislodging him from his entrenched positions. Still, thanks to Pershing's dogged determination, the American soldiers kept up a persistent pressure upon the forty German divisions confronting them, and steadily forced them back.¹

Pershing was very much surprised at the German request for an armistice, and suspected a trap. And when the Armistice was actually signed, he was personally very disappointed, as he had pressed for the surrender of the German army, and above all, was keen on punishing the Kaiser, his bitter hatred of whom is seen in his memoirs which appeared twelve years later.

Pershing was for crushing the enemy utterly. His unrelenting attitude was due to the fact that America could with the greatest ease carry on the war into 1919. The French and English, on the other hand, were anything but keen for a prolongation of the agony. Instruc-

¹ The British army, numerically of similar strength to the American, but more seasoned in warfare, confronted seventy German divisions. The French army, now more and more exhausted, also confronted seventy divisions, although it was some fifty per cent numerically stronger than either of the other two armies. Thirty American were equivalent numerically to sixty English, French, or German divisions.

tions were sent from Washington to Pershing to be firm, but not to press for unfair conditions. But, limited as were his powers, he interpreted his Government's orders as giving him authority for very rigorous terms in connection with the Armistice.

It can hardly be questioned that without the help of America the Allies would have been morally conquered in 1917 and would have been beaten in the field in 1918, and in this sense Pershing can rightly claim that he put the finishing stroke to the success of the war. It was chiefly owing to his personal efforts that America's help was given to the Allies with such telling effect and at such a critical period of the war. And yet it is very doubtful if Pershing's assistance would have been of any avail had the war taken a different course in the early part of 1918, while the Allies were fighting alone against the full fury of the Germans—a course which for a while seemed extremely likely. And it is also very questionable whether in assessing Pershing's achievements in the field, one could call them anything else save isolated, but not decisive contributions towards crushing the German onset.

But we can definitely say that Pershing by his long and lonely struggle against obstacles of a thousand kinds—moral and physical obstacles—obstacles the result of design or accident—obstacles placed in his way both by friends and foes, put up an almost superhuman fight for the solidarity of his army. And that united army he placed on the Western Front at the right sector and just at the right time. And he showed the same determination in overcoming the early shortcomings of his army as he showed in smashing the foe pitted against him. He was to the last a man of iron will, and it was his iron will that enabled America to contribute so effectively towards the successful issue of the war.

ENVER PASHA—THE VISIONARY

ENVER PASHA was undoubtedly the most unique commander in the World War. He stood out among the others not only owing to his Oriental imagination, but also owing to the many strange facets of his character and activities.

It is a difficult task to analyse the character of Enver Pasha. The Oriental will always be a mystery to the Occidental. And there is the further difficulty that so many contradictory statements have been published about the achievements and the temperament of the man. Yet there are some salient facts which can be vouched for. He was not only the commander-in-chief of the Turkish army, which under his guidance had a greater effect on the destiny of the war than is generally known, but he was also a great statesman. It took on an average twenty enemy divisions to cope with Enver's army. Yet all the time his army was in the field he controlled also the external and internal affairs of Turkey. The general and the politician were fused together in one man. While Wilson was a resourceful mediator, and Hindenburg and Ludendorff only very gradually and with great reluctance allowed politics to cross the path of their military activities, Enver Pasha deliberately took in his strong hands the control of both military and political affairs in Turkey, and maintained his sway over both domains consistently and uninterruptedly. Many individual military enterprises of his hopelessly miscarried, but, for all that, Turkey would never have been able to hold out for four years during the World War were it not for him.

With dictatorial powers the triumvirate Enver-Talaat-Djemal held sway in 1914 over the Young Turkish Party, who after the disastrous issue of the Balkan War took over complete control of the destinies of the State. And

Enver Pasha at the age of thirty-four was a Cæsar among the triumvirs.

At the beginning of the World War Enver's imagination was still under the spell of his visit to Berlin and the glamour of Germany's "shining armour." But he was especially influenced by a consciousness that a clear route through the Dardanelles to Russia was urgently needed by the Entente. And then he felt that the temptation to seize Constantinople was so overwhelming to the Allies at this juncture that Turkey had to reckon on an increasing aggressiveness from them as the Dardanelles became more and more a vital communication artery for them. Enver's fertile imagination could foresee the speedy transition from free transport of food to the investment of Constantinople by the Allies. The prize was far too tempting not to be seized when the slightest pretext showed itself. At the same time Enver was fully aware that Germany's scheme of a Baghdad railway and her commercial exploitation of Turkey were not prompted by unselfish motives. Still the main point to be considered, in Enver's opinion, was the fact that under the circumstances Germany was the nation that was least menacing to the interests of Turkey. Turkey's safety—this was his guiding principle in deciding which side to take. The possession of Constantinople was at stake.

But Enver's soaring imagination did not limit its visions to the mere thought of defence. It soared to far higher flights. Along the borders of the Caucasus and away beyond as far as Turkestan and Persia, dwelt the racial and religious brethren of the Turks. Egypt was a lost province to the once mighty Ottoman Empire. The dream of a Holy War ever flitted before Enver's imagination.

Originally Turkey's objective was merely to stay on the defensive on her entry into the war. But her primary aim was speedily eclipsed by Enver's ambitious schemes. The defence of the Dardanelles and of Irak which held forth no lure of fresh conquests, was at first regarded as a minor issue. Enver marshalled his forces chiefly in the Caucasus and in Syria and Palestine. Owing to the colossal size of the Turkish Empire and the lack of proper roads the transport of a convoy of troops was a difficult

job, involving months of ceaseless hardship. The soldiers had to march through hundreds of miles of desert and to climb lofty mountains. But Enver's fertile fancy scaled mountains, bridged torrents and flitted across arid wastes. It was exclusively the result of the incredible stoicism and fatalism of the Turkish soldiers that so many of his dreams came true.

When the general of the Caucasus army in November, 1914, did not forge ahead with sufficient speed, according to Enver's idea, along the wretched roads, among the snow-clad mountains, he assumed control of the troops himself. He led 150,000 men on an adventure which culminated in irreparable disaster. Absolutely sundered from all contacts with home, the Turkish divisions were attacked one by one by the Russians. Thousands fell in battle—tens of thousands froze to death. The army was practically wiped out to a man. Only scanty scraps of information about the details of the tragedy enacted in the Armenian mountains ever came to light. Enver barely escaped with his life. It was his first and last attempt to control actual military operations.

With the whimsicalness of fate this disaster had less effect on the trend of events than the dash for the Suez Canal which was carried out with more *élan* than fore-thought. The summons to the Holy War met with no response in Egypt. The attempt to menace the Canal with the shrunken division that succeeded in crossing the Sinai desert was a failure too. Yet the reaction of this effort created alarm in England. During the Ypres battles and the Gorlice campaign English divisions, which could badly be spared, were diverted to Egypt to protect the main arteries of the British Empire. After the complete failure of his dash to Egypt Enver lost all interest in this theatre of war. He was not in a position to gauge the effect of his campaign in England.

Owing to Enver's neglect to provide for the defence of Irak, British troops approached Baghdad cautiously. But after the failure of the dash to the Suez Canal he became keenly alert to the risk he was running of losing Baghdad. The difficulties which that rugged country presented to the Indian troops made it possible for him to bring up reinforcements from Palestine in time. The

reckless advance of the British towards Baghdad culminated in a complete victory for the Turks. The British troops were surrounded and had to surrender, and the menace to Baghdad was over.

A fantastic scheme devised by Enver at this time ended in one of the most gruesome tragedies recorded in modern history. He ordered a large number of the anti-Turk Christian population living on the frontiers of Armenia to trek into the interior of the country as a precautionary measure. Of the hundreds of thousands who were driven from their homes only a few thousand, after endless journeys through lofty mountains and deserts, reached their destination. The rest perished miserably.

The defence of the Dardanelles appealed far less at the start to Enver's marauding fancy than his schemes in Egypt, Persia, and the Caucasus. The shrewdness of the German General Liman and the futile and imprudent enterprises of the English combined to save the Dardanelles, despite Enver's remissness in preparing to counter the attack. The attempt by the British fleet to break through was a disastrous failure, which entailed heavy losses. The successful co-operation between the Turks and Liman frustrated the attacks by land of the English and French. With extraordinary, but unavailing heroism, the invading forces made desperate efforts again and again to push forward, but failed to advance beyond their positions near the coast. And the Turks, though they had no heavy artillery of their own, and were under the fire of the long-range naval guns of the British, defended the route to Constantinople in one of the fiercest battles in the course of the World War.

German submarines drove away the fleet of the enemy just at the most critical moment. And when Austro-Hungarian heavy batteries were fetched along through vanquished Serbia, the hour for evacuation had struck.

In the beginning of 1916 both Turkey and the Central Powers had reached the peak of their success. And now the forces that the end of the Dardanelles campaign liberated were used by Enver for fresh enterprises which held forth prospects of romance and conquest. The only

front which now afforded such vistas to Enver's imagination was the Caucasus. For months the Turkish troops trudged forward. But the Russians under Grandduke Nicholas did not await their arrival. They had devoted the winter to a systematic preparation for a great attack, and drove the Turks back past Trebizond and Erzerum.

Enver's previous success in Baghdad led him to dream of new expeditions to Persia, which seemed to hold forth promises of conquest. But while his Irak troops were losing themselves in the pathless wastes of Iran, the British assembled new forces outside Baghdad and seized the town.

The position of the Turks at the end of 1916 had become very difficult. Their best armies had vanished in the Dardanelles and Caucasus campaigns. Enver had even sent divisions to the Russo-Roumanian front in order to maintain Turkish prestige. Owing to the unfavourable trend of events his mind was now bent on the recapture of Baghdad, the loss of which had damaged his prestige in Turkey. In vain his attention was drawn to a new thunder-storm that was gathering on the Sinai front. Here the English had constructed a railway right through the desert, and had extended their front so as to protect the Suez Canal. When two attacks by the English early in 1917 failed, despite their great superiority in numbers, Enver devoted all his energy towards his scheme for the recapture of Baghdad. He depended on the co-operation in this enterprise of Falkenhayn who had come from Germany. Months passed by before the impossibility of this scheme was realised. The effort to save Baghdad was belated. The loss of Jerusalem followed. This was the second terrible thing that had befallen Turkey after the loss of Baghdad. While Enver's imagination had been soaring away through Persia, he lost Baghdad, and when his mind was intent on the recapture of Baghdad, he lost Jerusalem.

The collapse of Russia suggested to Enver new ideas for compensating for his losses. At last he saw the way open to the Caucasus and to Persia. He spent Turkey's last resources in the effort to take Bakum, Batu and Tiflis. This dash to the rich oil region almost led to a breach with Germany. The topsy-turvydom of events had

made Enver lose all sense of the possible and the attainable. He left the Palestine front in a crumbling condition. And the new will-o'-the-wisp had made him completely forget Irak.

It was miraculous how those two fronts held out through the summer of 1918. And then came the inevitable crash. The Turks fighting against forces twenty times their strength, lost Mossul and Damascus.

The war was over.

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